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CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK.

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THE HERMIT OF BELLYFULLE.

THE

CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK;

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF

The Hermit of Bellyfulle.

BY DOUGLAS JERROLD.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED AT THE PUNCH OFFICE,
85, FLEET STREET.

MDCCCXLVII.

LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS WHITEFRIARS.

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4825
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RESERVE

THE

CHRONICLES OF CLOVERNOOK;

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF

The Hermit of Bellpfulle.

WE have yet no truthful map of England. No offence to the publishers; but the verity must be uttered We have pored and pondered, and gone to our sheets with weak, winking eyes, having vainly searched, we cannot trust ourselves to say how many hundred maps of our beloved land, for the exact whereabout of Clovernook. We cannot find it. More: we doubt—so imperfect are all the maps—if any man can drop his finger on the spot, can point to the blessed locality of that most blissful village. He could as easily show to us the hundred of Utopia; the glittering weathercocks of the New Atalantis.

And shall we be more communicative than the publishers? No; the secret shall be buried with us: we will hug it under our shroud. We have heard of shrewd, short-speeched men who were the living caskets of some healing jewel; some restorative receipe to draw the burning fangs from gout; some anodyne to touch away sciatica into the lithesomeness of a kid; and these men have died, and have, to their own satisfaction at least, carried the secret into their coffins, as though

the mystery would comfort them as they rotted. There have been such men; and the black, begrimed father of all uncharitableness sits cross-legged upon their tombstones, and sniggers over them!

Nevertheless, we will not tell to the careless and irreverent world—a world noisy with the ringing of shillings—the whereabout of Clovernook. We might, would we condescend, give an all-sufficient reason for our closeness: we will do no such thing. No: the village is our own—consecrated to our own delicious leisure, when time runs by like a summer brook, dimpling and sweetly murmuring as it runs. We have the most potent right of freehold in the soil; nay, it is our lordship. We have there *droits du seigneur*; and in the very despotism of our ownership might, if we would, turn oaks into gibbets. Let this knowledge suffice to the reader; for we will not vouchsafe to him another pippin's-worth.

Thus much, however, we will say of the history of Clovernook. There is about it a very proper mist and haziness; it twinkles far, far away through the darkness of time, like a taper through a midnight casement. The spirit of fable that dallies with the vexed heart of man, and incarnates his dreams in living presences—for mightiest of the mighty is oft the muscle of fiction—fable says that Clovernook was the work of some sprite of Fancy, that in an idle and extravagant mood, made it a choice country seat; a green and flowery place, peopled with happy faces. And it was created, says fable, after this fashion.

The sprite took certain pieces of old, fine linen, which were torn and torn, and reduced to a very pulp, and then made into a substance, thin and spotless. And then the sprite flew away to distant woods, and gathered certain things, from which was expressed a liquid of darkest dye. And then, after the old, time-honoured way, a living thing was sacrificed; a bird much praised by men at Michaelmas, fell with bleeding

throat ; and the sprite, plucking a feather from the poor dead thing, waved and waved it, and the village of Clovernook grew and grew ; and cottages, silently as trees, rose from the earth ; and men and women came there by ones and twos ; and in good time smoke rose from chimneys, and cradles were rocked. And this, so saith fable, was the beginning of Clovernook.

Although we will not let the rabble of the world know the whereabout of our village—and by the rabble, be it understood, we do not mean the wretches who are guilty of daily hunger, and are condemned in the court of poverty of the high misdemeanor of patches and rags, —but we mean the mere money-changers, the folks who carry their sullen souls in the corners of their pockets, and think the site of Eden is covered with the Mint ; although we will not have Clovernook startled from its sweet, dreamy serenity—and we have sometimes known the very weasels in mid-day to doze there, given up to the delicious influence of the place—by the chariot wheels of that stony-hearted old dowager, Lady Mammon, with her false locks and ruddled cheeks,—we invite all others to our little village ; where they may loll in the sun or shade as suits them ; lie along on the green tufty sward, and kick their heels at fortune : where they may jig an evening dance in the meadows, and after retire to the inn—the one inn of Clovernook —glorified under the sign of "Gratis!"

Match us that sign if you can. What are your Georges and Dragons, your Kings' Heads, and Queens' Arms ; your Lions, Red, White, and Black ; your Mermaids and your Dolphins, to that large, embracing benevolence—Gratis? Doth not the word seem to throw its arms about you with a hugging welcome? Gratis! It is the voice of Nature, speaking from the fulness of her large heart. The word is written all over the blue heaven. The health-giving air whispers it about us. It rides the sunbeam—(save when statesman puts a window-pane 'twixt us and it). The lark trills it

high up in its skyey dome; the little wayside flower breathes gratis from its pinky mouth; the bright brook murmurs it; it is written in the harvest moon. Look and move where we will, delights—all "gratis," all breathing and beaming beauty—are about us; and yet how rarely do we seize the happiness, because, forsooth, it *is* a joy gratis?

But let us back to Clovernook. We offer it as a country tarrying-place for all who will accept its hospitality. We will show every green lane about it; every clump of trees—every bit of woodland, mead and dell. The villagers, too, may be found, upon acquaintance, not altogether boors. There are some strange folk among them. Men who have wrestled in the world, and have had their victories and their trippings-up; and now they have nothing to do but keep their little bits of garden-ground pranked with the earliest flowers; their only enemies, weeds, slugs, and snails. Odd people, we say it, are amongst them. Men, whose minds have been strangely carved and fashioned by the world; cut like odd fancies in walnut-tree; but though curious and grotesque, the minds are sound, with not a worm-hole in them. And these men meet in summer under the broad mulberry-tree before the "Gratis," and tell their stories—thoughts, humours; yea, their dreams. They have nothing to do but to consider that curious bit of clock-work, the mind, within them; and droll it sometimes is, to mark how they will try to take it to pieces, and then again to adjust its little wheels, its levers, and springs.

Some of these worthy folk may, in good time, be made known to our readers. But our first business is to introduce to them a most wise, and withal jocund sage, dwelling about a mile and three quarters from Clovernook, and known to the villagers as the Hermit of Bellyfulle. It was a happy chance that brought the anchorite and ourselves together. Thus it happened.

An autumn day had died gloriously in the west; dark-

ness came rapidly upon us, and to be brief with our mishap, we had lost our way. We had travelled from ———, a market-town, and as our saddle-bags—for we were upon our choice gelding—were, strangely enough, stuffed with the lawful golden coin of the realm, our fears rose with our sense of property. Again and again we thought of our gold, and thinking, sweated. To our apprehension, the gelding's legs became as eight; for though we saw no horse following us, yet could we certainly distinguish the sound of eight hoofs. We kept up a sharp trot, and oddly enough, the gelding that half-an-hour before showed signs of weariness and distress, trotted, trotted on as though fresh from a night's rest, corn and beans. As we went on, everything seemed strangely changing about us. The sky that had been black as coal, broke into a mild, clear grey; star by star came twinkling out; the cold, autumn wind blew soft and warm; our spirits became suddenly lightened, when our gelding—it is a most sagacious beast—made a dead halt.

The creature stood fast, and we looked vainly about us. We saw nothing—heard nothing. The animal still stood as upon a pedestal. And now, it pricked its ears —and now, snuffed, snuffed the air. Then the truth, in truth's best sweetness, came upon us. We were close to a human dwelling-place; we were in the neighbourhood of some of the units of the large family of man. Hope could not have deceived us: no, the truth was plain; for we smelt a smell of bacon and eggs.

Now, the gelding had merely paused to awaken our attention to the odorous fact. This opinion we carry, fast as a clenched nail, within us. For we merely took a deep inspiration, jerked our right knee against the saddle, and Bottom—for such is the beast's name—immediately understood that we had taken his meaning, and with mended step, went ambling on, as though his soul danced to the music of the frying-pan. A most rational beast is Bottom.

Still, we trotted on, down close, winding, mossy lanes—with odd, large, gnarled trees, throwing their arms across the narrow road, and sometimes meeting and hugging one another, like Titan wrestlers. There was something strange in the trees; something, as we thought, half-human: now and then they looked like giants; and now, we thought we saw the red goat-like noses of satyrs among the branches, with a quick jerking of their horned heads. Once or twice, thinking of our saddle-bags, we should have fainted from sheer cowardice; but as Bottom ambled onward, there was an increasing, a sustaining smell of bacon and eggs.

At length, Bottom stopt in a sort of triangular nook. There was no outlet. We looked; was it a glow-worm glimmering through that mass of green? No: it was tallow, delicious, household tallow; or if not, oil from leviathan. We dismounted, and groping our way, at length, through a wilderness of woodbine and ivy, found the door. We knocked.

"Come in," cried a voice, loud as a trumpet.

Melodious syllables! Sweet accents of sweet hospitality! Harmonious to the traveller on the outside, glorifying to the man at the hearth! He has escaped somewhat of the smitings of this single-stick world, who, when he hears knuckles at his postern, can throw himself back in his chair like a king upon his throne, and without a qualm of the heart, cry—"Come in!"

In darkness, we clawed about the door; at length we found the latch. In a moment we were at the hearth-stone of the greatest animal in the scale of creation—an animal that cooks.

"And who are you?" cried the master of the mansion.

What a pert, every-day asking is this! What a query to answer! Reader, did you ever, for one moment, say to your own soul,—"Who are you?" You know that you are a something, but *what* thing? You know that there is some living power, some knack within you, that helps you through life; that enables you to

make a bargain with an eye to a good pennyworth ; that even urges you to pick a wife from a few millions ; that walks with you in your business walks, that broods with you at home over your ledger—but what is it? Did you ever try to bring it face to face with yourself? Did you ever manfully endeavour to pluck, for a moment, this mystery from your blood, and look at it eye to eye—this You? It may be a terrible meeting; but sit in the magic circle of your own thoughts, and conjure the thing. It may be devil—it may be angel. No. You will take the chance: you are not curious: you are content to jog on ; you know that you are you ; but for the *what* you, whether perfect as the angels, or scabbed like Lazarus, why should you seek to know? Rather, dwell in the hopeful sweetness of your no-knowing.

"And who are you?" again asked the man we had elected for our host, ere we had time or thought to answer.

"We are travellers, and have lost our way," said we.

"Sit down and eat," said the master of the mansion. "And then, if the world has left you a light conscience, you can, if you will, sleep."

"We 'll first see to Bottom, and then have with you," said we ; for there was a ring of truth and good-fellowship in the man's voice, that, as we felt, made us old acquaintances. We crossed the threshold, and taking saddle and bridle from Bottom, sent him to his supper of sweet grass. We then returned to our host.

"And what brought you here?" he asked, offering the dish.

"Bacon and eggs," said we, helping ourselves to the glorious condiments bearing those names.

The man paused, looked down upon us, scratched the nape of his neck, and walked to a corner of his habitation. He then returned with a blushing gammon, which he sliced with the potent hand of a master. Smiling upon our appetite, he cracked a dozen or two more eggs, and flung them singing into the pan.

We would give a hundred guineas from the aforesaid saddle-bags, we thought, if we could carry away with us a lively portrait of our host. We shall never forget him: he will to our mind always be a stirring presence; but how—how shall we ever fix him upon paper?

"You don't eat," said our host, seeing our knife and fork for a moment idle, as we mused upon the difficulty. "Eat, eat, if you'd be welcome to the Hermit of Bellyfulle."

"Are you a hermit?" we asked, with a wondering look.

"Have I not said it? The Hermit of Bellyfulle, and this my Hermitage; this the Cell of the Corkscrew," cried the anchorite: and he then turned to the pan, his eye melting on the frying eggs.

The Hermit appeared between fifty and sixty—nearer sixty. He would have looked tall, but for his breadth of shoulder and bow of belly. His arms were short, thick, and sinewy; with a fist that might have throttled a wild boar or a keen attorney. Altogether he was a massive lump of a man, hard and active. His face was big and round, with a rich, larder look about it. His wide, red cheeks were here and there jewelled with good living. As gems are said by some to be no more than a congelation of the rarest essences attracted and distilled from mother earth, so were the living rubies burning in the cheeks of the Hermit, the hardened, incarnated juices of the deer of the forest—the volatile spirits of the vine. The Hermit had no nose; none, ladies, none. There was a little nob of flesh, like a small mushroom, dipt in wine, which made its unobtrusive way between the good man's cheeks, and through which he has been known to sneeze: but impudence itself could not call that piece of flesh a nose. The Hermit's mouth had all the capacity of large benevolence; large and wide, like an old pocket. There seemed a heavy unctuousness about the lower lip; a weight and drooping from very mellowness—like a ripe peach, cracking in the sun. His teeth—but that he had lost

one, as we afterwards learned, in active service on a Strasburg ham—were regular as a line of infantry, and no less dangerous. His forehead was large: his black hair waning into grey, save that one lock which grew like the forelock of old Time, was raven still. His eyes were small, and so deep in his head, no man ever saw the whites of them: there they were, like black beads sunk in scarlet flesh. Such is the poor, weak picture of the glorious living face: and then every bit of it shone, as though it had been smeared with sacrificial fat. The Hermit's voice was deep and clear; and he had a sweet, heart-warming chuckle, which came like wine gurgling from a flask. The very pope of hermits was the Hermit of Bellyfulle.

This worthy anchorite wore no weed of grey—not he. He had a capacious gown of faded scarlet damask, worn —much worn: yet there were traces in it of past beauty; goodly bunches of grapes, antique flagons, and Cupids flaying a buck. This robe was girded about the waist with a thick silken rope; a relic, as he told us, picked up in a pilgrimage. It had been a bell-rope in the best hostelry of Palestine. The nether anatomy of the recluse showed, as we thought, that all the vanity of the world had not died within him, for he wore black velvet breeches; and, moreover, seemed to throw an approving glance at his leg, cased in unwrinkled silken hose of ebon black. His feet were easily lodged in large slippers of cramoisy velvet, with here and there a glimmering of old gold lace.

A hermit would be no hermit without a skull. The anchorite of Bellyfulle was fitly provided with such tangible aid to solemn reflection: for he had the skull of a heathen Paladin, in the which—for the top had been curiously sawn off, and hinged, and a silver box contrived in the cavity—in the which the Hermit of Bellyfulle kept his best tobacco. He moreover showed his horror and contempt for heathenism by sinking the basanet of a Saracen knight into a spittoon.

The Cell of the Corkscrew revealed the magnanimity of its hermit indweller. Its walls were tapestried with sides of bacon, with hams smoked over fires of cedar and sandal-wood. Festoons of sausages hung from the roof, dazzling the eyes and melting the heart of the beholder. Frequent peering forth, with death-grim snout, a boar's head would show itself, to the ear of fancy grunting for the knife. And now, the eye would wander to a squab of flesh—a buffalo's hump—toothsome to rest upon. And then there were tongues, as many as at Babel, hanging on all sides; tongues of deer, of antelope, of Indian ox, smoked and cured by Indian cooks. Glowing and beautiful were a hundred vitreous jars of pungent pickle, disposed about the cell with the finest consideration of colour and effect. There, too, was the delicious olive, in its mild, immortal green, for Bacchus in his after-dinner hour to dally with.

It was not until the next morning that the Hermit discovered to us all the riches, the stores, the conveniences of the Cell of the Corkscrew, and its adjoining messuages. But as we have opened the matter, we will not put it off to a future page, but at once make an end of it. We found that the room wherein we supped was made sacred to knife and fork. By the way, let us inform the reader that those instruments, of huge dimensions, surmounted the mantel-piece. The Hermit, raising his small jet eyes towards them, mildly said, with a slight chuckle, "My lares—the guardian angels of my fire-side."

An adjoining room was fitted round with shelves, on which were pots and packages of preserves and spices, and baskets of candied fruits, and here and there a case of heart-consoling Curaçoa—soft and subtle noyeau—biting absinthe; nay, all the cordials refined by the inquiring spirit of man from nature's raw materials. "What a delicious smell!" we cried. "I call it my phœnix' nest," said the Hermit, and he said no more. He then took us down into his cellar. We descended

some fifty steps into a place of vast extent. "Cut by some good-natured people of the olden time," said the Hermit; "cut out of the living rock. And now, sir, the sun shines on no sort of grape that is not bottled here;" and the Hermit spoke with a voice of triumph, and gently waved the lamp in his hand to and fro, its beams falling upon a thousand and a thousand bottles, that to our excited fancy seemed to laugh like negroes in the sun.

"Simple, thoughtless man would not think it, but there is much knowledge to be taken from this cellar," said the Hermit.

"With the help of a corkscrew," said we.

"Right; with the blessing of a corkscrew," cried the Hermit. "But for a time treading on the carnal man, there is other, higher knowledge. You will observe, sir, that I have laid out my bottles geographically; from the cyder of Devonshire to the rice spirit of China. In this way, I manage to go entirely round the world once a year."

"Is it possible?" we asked, and "we fear it," in a voice of incredulity; for the Hermit drew himself up, and spoke very solemnly.

"Man," said he, "a lie in any place is a poor sneaking thing; still, a lie may be better or worse by its locality. Now the man," and here the anchorite trembled with emotion, "the man who would tell a lie in a wine-cellar, is a wretch unutterable. His heart's-blood, at the best, is bad vinegar."

"It is—it is," said we, feeling the rebuke. "And this is a map of the world, done by Bacchus?"

The Hermit of Bellyfulle, smiling benevolently, gently nodded his head. "You will perceive it. Here, as I said, is the cyder, the ale of England. There, Champagne, Burgundy, Bordeaux. There, the Johannisberg. At the present time, I am in Hungary, drinking Tokay."

"It is delightful," we said, "to meet you in so favoured a place."

Leaving the cellar, the Hermit took us to his farm-

yard. Instantaneously we were surrounded by all sorts of poultry. We were particularly pleased with a breed of fowls, of enormous size, and of the whitest and most dazzling plumage.

"You like them?" said the Hermit, observing our look of admiration. "So do I. Were it not that I am almost dead to fleshly affections, I should say they were my passion. They are capons, sir. It is a strange weakness, but I love them dearly; especially with pork, judiciously pickled. I call them, sir," and the Hermit faintly smiled, "I call them my monks."

We next visited the fish-ponds. "Here, sir," said the Hermit, "are my trout."

"How very large!" we exclaimed, as some huge fish darted from under the weeds.

"Now, sir, though you will not venture to doubt my word, others might. I have a great moral experiment going on among these fish. They are entirely fed upon artificial flies."

"Is it possible?" we asked. "For what purpose?"

"To show the sufficiency of the imagination to the satisfaction of the belly," replied the Hermit.

"It will be a great political discovery," said we. "Have you tried the system on yourself?"

Either the Hermit did not hear us, or hearing, disdained an answer; for he walked on, we following. "My orchard," said he, pointing to a very forest of trees, loaded with the fruits of autumn.

"Are you not frequently robbed?" we asked. "Have you no spring-guns, man-traps— "

"Look," said the Hermit, and he pointed to a written board fastened to one of the trees—there were twenty such about the orchard—which board contained a notice, inviting in the prettiest and most paternal words all little boys who might pass that way, to come into the orchard, and eat their fill. They were warned upon no account to take the smallest fruit, but to carefully pick the largest, the ripest, and the best. There were likewise

ladders provided that the boys might not injure the boughs, or rend their breeches by climbing. Or if they should chance to tear their garments, there was an oilskin bag hanging from a large walnut-tree in the middle of the orchard, in which bag were needles and thread, to repair for the nonce any gash that might else scandalise the out-door world.

"But do not the birds plunder you?" we asked.

"My cherries, for two or three years, suffered grievously from the rooks," said the Hermit; "but they are sensible birds, sir; very sensible. I bought the cast-off coat of a Jew money-lender, and stuffing it with straw, I hung it upon the highest tree. The rooks are clever birds, sir—they never perched again."

Having shown to the reader the cell and grounds—we have purposely omitted all notices of bed-rooms, pantry, and out-houses, of the Hermit of Bellyfulle—we must bring the said reader back to the first hour of our introduction to the anchorite. Be it remembered, that we are still tired and joint-sore with our journey, and that we have only eaten three rashers, and swallowed half-a-dozen eggs.

To say nothing of the external dignity of the Hermit, it was evident to us, from one single circumstance, that he was a man of superior mind. He never uttered a syllable until we both had supped. In an afterchange of thought, the Hermit confessed that he admired his guest upon the same high principle.

"A man, sir," observed the sage, "who gabbles at his dinner, may be said to swallow, not to eat. Eating, sir, is as much a mental, nay more so than a physical task. There is, sir, a wonderful sympathy between the brain and the palate. Talk destroys the exquisite harmony between them. All the nobler functions of the soul should be present during every mouthful; and so sublimating it, the wise man eats with his brain, the fool with his mouth."

"You have studied these things curiously," said we.

"It was my prime object in quitting the world. I resolved, upon the death of my fourth wife, to shut myself up from the vanities of life, and write a cookery book —an encyclopædia of the kitchen."

"It is to be hoped," said we, "you have not repented of your magnanimity?"

"No, sir; no. I have been hard at work—but it is the labour of a life. I have toiled ten years, and only got to ducks."

"Ducks!"

"Ducks, sir. Ten years, and only finished four letters: but hope is strong: I have no doubt I shall live to see Z. By that time the ignorant world will begin to feel its mouth water for a sirloin of zebra; and I am the only man who can tell the world how to cook it."

"A sirloin of zebra! Was there ever such a joint put upon a spit?"

"I have partaken, sir, of hundreds; but those feasts were in the blessed region of As-you-like."

"As-you-like! Where may that region be?" we asked.

The Hermit's eyes filled with tears, and he answered, with a broken voice, "I cannot tell—I cannot tell; though I have lived there—have children there—I know not where it is, know not how to seek it."

"How," we asked, "did you first find it out?"

"That, sir, is the strangest story of my life; though I have many, many stories in that box," and the Hermit pointed to a large cedar chest in the corner, "that may some day puzzle the printer. However, sir, all I know you shall know. Brandy or Hollands?" asked the Hermit, pushing the bottles. "Both smuggled, upon my honour," said the sage, laying his hand upon his breast. "Do you take lemon? Here, sir, is a squeezer made of true eremite maple. Sugar; water, hot and cold. And now, sir, you shall have my story. I call it—

"The Flying Bottle.

"I have been a traveller, sir; a great traveller. It was my fortune, when about five-and-twenty, to sail to the Indian Seas. We dropped anchor close to one of the islands to be found in those blissful waters. I went ashore, and everything about me seemed new and strange, but beautiful, very beautiful. I had wandered from my party, and was alone in a field overgrown with hyacinths, when a bottle suddenly sprang up beneath my foot; and as I walked, the bottle—a black wine-bottle, no more—hopped, hopped like a bird, before me. I ran after it; but the faster I ran, the quicker it hopped. At length, mustering all my strength, I ran until I fairly ran the bottle down. Then smelling at its mouth, for there was no cork in it, I smelt a most delicious odour; I raised the bottle to my lips, and drank. Instantly my hands seemed riveted around the vessel, and two wings sprang from the sides of the bottle. In a moment, I was raised from the earth. I tried to let go the bottle, but my hands were as a part of it; and still the bottle flew and flew like an eagle to the sun; and I swooned, and knew no more until I awoke in a region which the inhabitants told me was the kingdom of As-you-like.

"I looked about me, and I could have sworn that I was in some street in London; for in my boyhood, I had once visited that wonderful and wicked city, taken thither by my grandfather. The houses were familiar to me; the character of the people, their clothes, nay, their language, all seemed known to me; but when I said as much, the worthy folks about me smiled at my delusion: and further, when I told them the story of the bottle, they shook their heads, and said they doubted not I should soon discover my mistake. And very soon I did so. That I should know the language of the people of As-you-like as perfectly as themselves was

only a part of the mystery of the bottle. I had drunk it from its mouth.

"It was plain that I was considered a curiosity by the folks, who, indeed, looked upon me with that sort of pity and forbearance which I have known displayed by soft-hearted people towards a Hottentot. It was plain they felt that I had much in common with them all, but was nevertheless of a much lower degree of sensibility and intelligence. It is right, however, that I should confess that this opinion arose from my own coarse habits—from my education, and my manners contracted in my previous life. To me, they seemed the simplest, the most foolish of created things; whilst, as I afterwards discovered, they at times looked upon me with so much aversion, that, had they not been the tenderest, the gentlest people in the world, they would have cast me forth to perish in the streets. But I am forgetting myself," said the Hermit—"I am falling into the common talk of the world about us: it was impossible that even a dog should perish in the streets of As-you-like.

"Before I descend to my own particular adventures in that glorious region, I will endeavour to give you some idea of its government, its religion, its laws, and the social habits of its people. Pardon me, sir," said the Hermit, wiping his eyes and emptying his glass, "but I cannot touch upon this theme, without feeling my heart melt like butter in my body. Whilst I talk of As-you-like, my spirits sink; I am heavy, to very dumpishness."

Pausing a moment, and clearing his throat, the Hermit proceeded.

"And first, sir, for the order of government. As-you-like is a monarchy; a limited monarchy. At the time I dwelt there, the crown was worn by King Abdomen, almost the greatest man that ever walked. His natural accomplishments were many: he was held to make a more melodious sneeze than any man in the universe.

He invented buttons, the people of As-you-like before his time tying their clothes about them with strings. He also invented quart goblets. He was the son of King Stubborn, known as the King of the Shortwools.

"After the king came the nobility; that is, the men who had shown themselves better than other men, and whose virtues were worked into their titles.

"Thus there was the Duke of Lovingkindness; the Marquis of Sensibility; the Earl of Tenderheart; the Baron of Hospitality, and so forth. Touching, too, was the heraldry of As-you-like. The royal arms were, charity healing a bruised lamb, with the legend, *Dieu et paix*. And then for the coach-panels of the aristocracy, I have stood by the hour, at holiday times, watching them; and tears have crept into my eyes, and my heart has softened under their delicious influence. There were no lions, griffins, panthers, lynxes—no swords or daggers—no short verbal incitements to manquelling. Oh, no! One nobleman would have for his bearings a large wheaten loaf, with the legend—*Ask and have*. Another would have a hand bearing a purse, with the question—*Who lacks?* Another would have a truckle-bed painted on his panels, with the words—*To the tired and footsore*. Another would display some comely garment, with—*New clothes for rags*. Oh! I could go through a thousand of such bearings, all with the prettiest quaintness showing the soft, fleshly heart of the nobleman, and inviting, with all the brief simplicity of true tenderness, the hungry, the poor, the weary, and the sick, to come, feed, and be comforted. And these men were of the nobility of As-you-like; nor was there even a dog to show his democratic teeth at them.

"The church was held in deepest reverence. Happy was the man who, in his noon-day walk, should meet a bishop; for it was held by him as an omen of every manner of good fortune. This beautiful superstition arose, doubtless, from the love and veneration paid by

the people to the ministers of religion, who, from their tenderness, their piety, their affection towards their flocks, were looked upon as the very porters to heaven. The love of the people placed in the hands of their bishops heaps and heaps of money; but as quickly as it was heaped, was it scattered again by the ministers of the faith, who were thus perpetually preaching goodness and charity at the hearths of the poor, and the poor were every hour lifting up their hands and blessing them. It was not enough that the bishops were thus toilsome in their out-door work of good; but in the making of new laws and amending of old ones, they showed the sweetness, and, in the truest sense, the greatness, of the human spirit. During my stay in As-you-like, what we should call the House of Lords, but what in that country was called the House of Virtues, debated on what some of their lordships deemed a very pretty case to go to war upon; and sooth to say, for a time, the House of Virtues seemed to forget the active benevolence that had heretofore been its moving principle. Whereupon the bishops one by one arose, and from their lips there flowed such heavenly music, in their eyes there sparkled such apostolic tears, that all the members of the House of Virtues rose, and with one accord fell to embracing one another, and called all the world their brothers, and vowed they would talk away the misunderstanding between themselves and neighbours; they would not shed blood, they would not go to war.

"And this was ever after called the peace of the bishops.

"The second deliberative assembly was called the House of Workers. No man could be one of these, who had not made known to the world his wisdom—his justice—his worship of truth for truth's sake. No worker was returned upon the mere chance of his fitness. He must be known as an out-door worker for the good of his fellowmen, before he could be sent, an honoured member, to the House. The duty of the assembly was to make

laws ; and as these were to be made for all men, it was the prime endeavour and striving of the workers to write them in the plainest words, in the briefest meaning. They would debate and work for a whole day—they always assembled with clear heads and fresh spirits every morning at nine—to enshrine their wisdom in the fewest syllables. And whereas, here with us we give our children Goody Two Shoes and Jack and the Bean Stalk, as the easiest and simplest lessons for their tender minds to fasten on, in As-you-like the little creatures read the Abridgment of the Statutes for their first book ; so clear, so lucid, so direct was it in its meaning and its purpose.

" Nevertheless, as there were some dull and giddy folk, who, after all the labour of the House of Workers, could or would not know the laws, there were certain meek and loving-kind professors called goodmen guides, answering to our attornies, whose delight it was, for the very smallest imaginable sum, to interpret and make known the power and beauty of the statutes. And whereas, among us, physicians and surgeons—may the spirits of charity and peace consecrate their fire-sides !—set apart a portion of the day to feel the pulse of stricken poverty, to comfort and solace the maimed and wasting poor—so in As-you-like, did these goodmen guides give a part of their time to the passionate and ignorant, advising them to abstain from the feverish turmoil of law ; showing them how suspense would bake their blood and eat their hearts, and wear and weigh down man's noble spirit. And thus, these goodmen guides would, I may say, with a silken string, lead men back to content and neighbourly adjustment. When men could pay for such counsel, they paid a moderate cost ; when they were poor, they were advised, as by the free benevolence of the mediator.

" The people of As-you-like had, a thousand years or so before, waged war with other nations. There could be no doubt of it, for the cannon still remained. I saw

what at one time had been the arsenal. There were several pieces of artillery; the swallows had built their nests under their very mouths. As I will not disguise anything, I own there were a few persons who, when a war was talked of, the war so happily prevented by the bishops, strutted and looked big, and with swollen cheeks gabbled about glory. But they were smiled at for their simplicity; advised, corrected by the dominant reason of the country, and, after a time, confessed themselves to be very much ashamed of their past folly.

"Perhaps the manner in which the As-you-likeans transacted business was strange; it may appear incredible. I was never more surprised than when I first overheard two men dealing for a horse. One was a seller of horses, the other seemed a comfortable yeoman. 'That is a pretty nag of yours,' said the yeoman. 'Pretty enough outside,' said the horse-dealer. 'I will give you ten lumps for it,' said the farmer (the *lump* signifying our pound). 'No, you shall not,' answered the horse-dealer; 'for the nag shys, and stumbles, and is touched a little in the wind. Nevertheless, the thing is worth four lumps.'—'You have said it?' cried the yeoman. 'I have said it,' answered the horse-dealer. Understand, that this is the only form of oath—if I may so call it—in As-you-like. 'You have said it?' 'I have said it.' Such is the most solemn protestation among all people, from the king to the herdsman.

"The shops in As-you-like are very beautiful. All the goods are labelled at a certain price. You want, let us say, a pair of stockings. You enter the shop. The common salutation is 'Peace under this roof'—and the shopkeeper answers—'Peace at your home.' You look at the stockings, and laying down the money, take the goods and depart. The tradesman never bends his back in thankfulness until his nose touches the counter; he is in no spasm of politeness; not he; you would think him the buyer and not the seller. I remember being particularly astonished at what I thought the ill

manners of a tradesman, to whom I told my astonishment. 'What, friend,' he said, 'should I do? My neighbour wants a fire-shovel—I sell a fire-shovel. If I ought to fling so many thanks at him for buying the fire-shovel, should he not first thank me for being here with fire-shovels to sell? Politeness, friend—as you call it—may be very well; but I should somehow suspect the wholesale dealer in it. Where I should carry away so much politeness, I should fear I had short weight." A strange people, you must own, these As-you-likeans.

"Taxation was light, for there was no man idle in As-you-like. Indeed, there was but one tax: it was called the truth-tax; and for this reason. Every man gave in an account of his wealth and goods, and paid in proportion to his substance. There had been other taxes, but all these were merged into this one tax, by a solemn determination of the House of Virtues. 'Since Providence has given to us the greatest measure of its gifts, it has thereby made us the chancellors to poorer men.' Upon this avowed principle, the one tax was made. 'Would it not be the trick of roguery to do otherwise?' they said. 'Should we not blush to see the ploughman sweating at his task, knowing that, squared by his means, he paid more than we? Should we not feel the robbers of the man—not the Virtues banded together to protect him?' And thus, there was but one tax. In former ages there had been many; for I was shown in the national museum of As-you-like, several mummies, dry and coloured like saddle-leather, that in past centuries had been living custom-house officers and excisemen.

"There were prisons in As-you-like, in which the idle and the vicious were made to work, and taught the wickedness, the very folly of guilt. As the state, however, with paternal love, watched, I may say it, at the very cradles of the poor,—teaching the pauper, as he grew, a self-responsibility; showing to him right and wrong, not permitting him to grow up with, at best, an idle, vague notion, a mere guess at black and white,—

there were few criminals. The state did not expose its babies—for the poor are its children—to hang them when men.

"So dear were the wants of the poor to the rulers of As-you-like, that, on one occasion, in a year of scarcity, the monarch sold all his horses—the beautiful cattle went at 70,000 *lumps*—and laid out the money in building school-rooms and finding teachers for pauper babies.

"And the state, believing man to be something more than a thing of digestion, was always surrounding the people with objects of loveliness, so that a sense of the beautiful might be with them even as the colour of their blood, and thus might soften and elevate the spirit of man, and teach him true gentleness out of his very admiration of the works of his fellow. Hence, the museums and picture-galleries, and abbeys and churches were all thrown open to the people, who always seemed refined, subdued by the emanations of loveliness around them.

"There were very many rich people in As-you-like, but I never knew them to be thought a bit the better of for their money. They were thought fortunate—no more. They were looked upon as men, who having put into a lottery, had had the luck to draw a prize. As for the poor, they were always treated with a softness of manner that surprised me. The poor man in As-you-like seemed privileged by his poverty. He seemed to have a stronger claim to the sympathies of those, in worldly substance, over him. Had a rich man talked brutally, or domineered over, or ill-used a pauper in As-you-like, he would have been looked upon as we look upon a man who beats a woman. There was thought to be a moral cowardice in the act that made its doer despicable. Hence, it was as common in As-you-like to see the rich man first touch his hat to the poor, as with us for the pauper to make preliminary homage to wealth. Then, in As-you-like, no man cared to disguise the smallness of his means. To call a man a pauper was n

more than with us to say his eyes are grey or hazel. And though there were poor men, there was no famishing creature, no God's image, sitting with his bony, idle hands before him, like a maniac in a cage; brutalized, maddened by the world's selfishness.

"For ten years I lived in As-you-like. Ten happy years. I married, became a father, and"—

"And what,"—we asked of the Hermit,—"what made you leave so blessed a spot?"

"I was one day in my garden, strolling about, whilst they were laying dinner. I paused to look at my melon-bed, when out hopped the black bottle. Without a thought I ran after it—woe is me that I did so!—and caught it in my grasp. I felt the bottle mount; I became instantly dizzy, and I know not what passed, but when I came to myself, I was lying on a truss of straw in an English farm-yard."

"A most extraordinary adventure," said we.

"Yes, I've seen a few things in my time," said the Hermit,—"but they must remain for future talk between us."

Worn with our last night's journey, and beguiled into the sweet sin of late hours by the curious liquor and eke curious discourse of the Hermit of Bellyfulle, it was not until the clock struck nine that we became conscious of our new resting-place. A bright day shone upon us reproachfully through the casement; flowers shook their heads impatiently at the panes; cocks without crowed, as we thought, in angry note, at their master's guest, and the clock—a pretty piece of Venice work upon the mantel-piece—ticked remonstrance. With a jump, we leapt from goose feathers to the floor.

We flung open the casement, and the sweet, fresh, nimble air came, like God's blessing, into the chamber. Sinking in an easy chair, with a stocking in our right hand, we made stern questioning of our memory. It was all true—true as adamant. We were the guest of

the bounteous Hermit of Bellyfulle; we sat, at tha time, beneath the roof-tree of the Cell of the Corkscrewt

How, indeed, could we question the sweet reality? All things about us revealed the taste, the mellow heart, of the anchorite householder. The chamber was small—the bed a primitive truckle; but there was an Indian carpet, soft as lamb's-wool, on the floor; there were books, not many, on a shelf: and the black oak wainscot was carved with fruit and knots of flowers, with here a flask and there a flaggon. Above the mantle-piece was this sentence, in letters of ruddy gold:—

Happy is the man who may tell all his dreams.

In a compartment of the wainscot, over the head of the bed, was also written:—

Make your bed as a coffin,
and your coffin will be as a bed.

As we pondered on the philosophy of these lines, we looked dreamily about us, and for the first time saw in a corner of the chamber a little door. Above it was carved a small delicate hand and arm in the action of beckoning, with what seemed to us a string of pearls about the wrist. Throwing down our stocking, we opened the door, and heard distinctly the sound of running water. We descended two or three low steps, and following our ear, went through a narrow, winding, sloping passage, cut, as it seemed, out of rock, the floor covered with rushes and moss. In half a minute we stood beside a brilliant fountain, tumbling and glittering in a large natural basin—a hollow of the rock. The sky was sapphire blue, and flowers, carefully tended, grew around the edge of the spring: and there, too, was short greensward, tender to the feet. Towels, dried on beds of thyme, were spread on a sort of garden-seat, with slippers, dressing-gown, and other covering. We at once apprehended the meaning of the beckoning hand, and with short preparation plunged into the spring.

In due season we returned to our chamber. Touching was the care of our host! A small tankard of hot spiced wine stood upon the table, filling the room with aromatic sweetness. Was not this the very heart of hospitality? As we hastily prepared ourselves to meet the eremite, we heard voices; and, as we thought, the sweet, low voice of woman. Could it be the Hermit's wife? He had said nothing of so blissful an appendage to Corkscrew Cell; nevertheless, it might be. We quickened our speed; for, thought we, Madam the Hermitess may be waiting breakfast.

We hastened to what we will call the refectory. The Hermit was seated in his chair; the breakfast—it would have put a stomach into a mummy—was laid out, widely and bounteously. As we entered, the Hermit raised his face, scarlet with eating, from a platter; and his little black eyes twinkling welcome, he nodded, and gasped from his full mouth—"*Salve!* Sit and eat."

One hour at least had run to the past, ere another word was spoken. "That brawn, sir, was cured in Paradise," were the next words uttered, as the Hermit pushed away his platter, and fell like a pillow in his chair. "The hog, sir, is a wonderful philosopher."

"Philosopher!" we cried, for the moment inattentive to the truth delivered.

"Philosopher! We call him filthy, ugly names; brand him as a foul and doltish thing. It is like the hurried ignorance of men. I look upon the pig, sir, as the philosopher of brutes—yea, the Diogenes of four-legged creatures. Consider, sir. Contemplate the doings of a hog. See him, sir, with his frank stupidity; or what, to skin-deep thinkers, seemeth stupidity. Mark him wallowing in gutter-mud; see him in the haunts of men, even where fever comes, sometimes, alas! as kindest handmaid to poverty. See him, with his broad, quivering snout snuffing at the thresholds of very beggars. With what gust will he munch a cabbage-stalk! With what a grunt of gratitude will he take unto him-

self the leavings of the veriest poor! There is nought that tooth can pierce, that goodman hog will turn aside from. He will get fat and flavour from a dunghill; nay, in hopeful discovery, shove his snout into a cinder heap. These are bad habits; nasty, foul, degrading practices. And yet, sir, what comes of them? Why, this, sir—this;" and the Hermit struck the flat of his knife on a huge wedge of brawn. "Your philosopher considers, and takes experience of man; and only as he is curious in all the doings, from noblest to basest of the animal, is he, the said philosopher, worthy of his gown. He elaborates and refines his experience, gathered from highway and alley, and hovel, and cellar; and then out of the very juices of this digested wisdom, he leaves an oral system, or a written scroll. Now, sir, what the brawn is to the hog, is Plato's book to Plato: a sweet and unctuous lump, drawn and rarefied, and elaborated, from even the foulest doings of the world for the world's better wisdom. When my lady sees Master Pig munching and wallowing in a ditch, she curls her nose and lifts her shoulders at his nastiness. And lo! when the same pig's leg, fragrant with sage and patriarchal onion, smokes upon the board, —the same lady sendeth her plate three times. It is even so with philosophers, and the true men of the world. They have lived and died despised in alleys; and afterwards are fed upon in tapestried chambers. I never look upon a hog, even in his foulest plight, but I consider him tenderly, affectionately, as the living, pauper laboratory from which in good season men may carve most melting sweets. It is in this spirit, I—as I take it—judiciously class philosopher and pig."

"True," said we; "there may be affinity." Then resolving to know if it was the voice of woman we had heard, we returned to the swine-flesh and the lady glanced at by our host. "Your figure of the lady and the pig's leg," said we, "reminds us of a question we had to ask. Pardon us, if we are bold; but heard

we not, ere we entered, the small, musical pipe of the other sex?"

"My laundress, sir," answered the Hermit; "she lives in Clovernook. In the wicked, noisy, topsy-turvy world you come from, she was a lady in her own right, with broad acres and sacks of gold."

"And now a laundress," cried we. "How came such change about? What cruelty of fortune?"

"A touch of conscience—a sweet touch, sir. The Countess, it was her belief, had killed two milliners."

"Killed them!" we cried.

"Not a statutable, Tyburn-killing," answered the Hermit; "not what would be called killing by twelve men bolted in a box; but what, sir, a jury of angels may look very grave at, and more, return a most uncomfortable verdict upon."

"Pray, sir, explain the case," we said.

"Phoo! the story 's as short as short-cake," said the Hermit. "Her Ladyship would take no answer: it was a birth-day, or a court-day, or a gad-about of some sort; and her Ladyship, at a short notice, was to be very fine indeed. There were three girls, milliners, all sick and wasted at the time, with fading eyes, hectic faces, and deep coughs—death, sir, croaking and wheezing in their throats. The last work two of the girls did was for Lady Swandown. She went to the show, whatever it was, with almost the last sigh of the girls in her fine dress. The two girls died, and her Ladyship—she is yet a fine woman, sir, in the rich fulness of some forty-five—forswore the drawing-room world, and coming here to Clovernook, brought the surviving sister with her."

"Is it possible?" we asked.

"You shall see the Countess Swandown; though in Clovernook she is simply called Dame Diaper. Ha! it is a pretty sight to see her tending Mabel, as we call her here, the last of the sister milliners: to see the Countess petting and nursing her, and walking with

her down the green lanes ; and when the poor thing is too weak to walk, it is indeed pleasant to see the Countess drawing the sick milliner in a little, light, easy sort of a coach,"

"A sight indeed!" we cried.

"Yes," said the Hermit, with a grave look ; "when we think of the poor things already killed, and the creature yet suffering, it is a sight, I think, to please the very cherubs. You shall see them both, sir ; both Dame Diaper and Mabel."

"But you said the Countess—that is, the Dame—was laundress here?"

"I should say, a sort of lady-laundress ; a clear-starcher. She has taken the work by way of penance ; and bringing all her genius to bear upon it, has elevated a mere knack into fine art, sir. My cravats and ruffles are very pictures. You heard us talking? Ay, sir, the old story—the old grievance, sir, 'twixt man and woman," said the Hermit.

"And what is that, sir?" we asked.

The Hermit, shaking his head and groaning, cried—"Buttons."

"Buttons!" said we.

The Hermit drew himself closer to the table, and spreading his arms upon it, leaned forward with the serious air of a man prepared to discuss a grave thing. "Buttons," he repeated. Then clearing his throat, he began : "In the course of your long, and, as I hope, well-spent life, has it never come with thunder-bolt conviction upon you, that all washerwomen, clear-starchers, getters-up of fine linen, or under whatever name Eve's daughters,—for as Eve brought upon us the stern necessity of a shirt, it is but just that her girls should wash it,—under whatever name they cleanse and beautify flax and cotton, that they are all under some compact, implied or solemnly entered upon amongst themselves and their non-washing, non-starching, non-getting-up sisterhood, that by means subtle, and almost

mortally certain, they shall worry, coax, or drive all bachelors and widowers soever into the pound of irredeemable wedlock? Has this tremendous truth, sir, never struck you?"

"How—by what means?" we asked.

"Simply, by buttons," answered the Hermit, bringing down his clenched fist upon the table.

We knew it—we looked incredulous.

"See here, sir," said the Hermit, leaning still further across the table. "I will take a man, who, on his outstart in life, set his hat acock at matrimony—a man who defies Hymen and all his wicked wiles. Nevertheless, sir, the man must wear a shirt; the man must have a washerwoman. Think you, that that shirt, returning from the tub, never wants one—two—three buttons? Always, sir—always. Sir, though I am now an anchorite, I have lived in your bustling world, and seen, ay, quite as much as any one of its manifold wickedness. Well, the man—the buttonless man—at first calmly remonstrates with his laundress. He pathetically wrings his wrists at her, and shows his condition. The woman turns upon him her wainscot face, and promises amendment. The thing shall never happen again. The week revolves. Think you, the next shirt has its just and lawful number of buttons? Devil a bit!"

Starting at the word, we looked, we fear, reproachfully in the Hermit's face.

"Pardon me; let it be as it had never been said," cried the anchorite—a deeper tint dawning in his face, and his eye looking suddenly moist. "Pardon me, but the heart has strange chords; even buttons may sometimes shatter them."

We bowed, and begged the Hermit to proceed.

"Well, sir," said our host, after an effort, "week after week the poor man wrangles with his washerwoman: from the very gentleness of even maidenly complaint, the remonstrance rises to a hurricane of abuse; and still the washerwoman, as it would seem

bound by her oath to her unmarried sisterhood, brings home no shirt complete in all its buttons. Man—the fiercest of his kind—cannot always rage. He becomes tired—ashamed of clamour. He sighs, and bears his buttonless fate. His thoughts take a new turn. In his melancholy, his heart opens; he is softened—subdued; and in this, his hour of weakness, a voice—a demon voice—whispers to him, 'Fond, foolish man! why trust thy buttons to an alien? Why helplessly depend upon the needle and thread of one who loves not thee, but thy shilling? Take a wife; have a woman of thine own, who shall care for thy buttons!' The tempter is strong. The man smiles distrustfully, but still he smiles. That very night—it so happens—he goes to a house-warming. He is partner at cards with Miss Kitty. She never did look so toothsome. And then her voice—'twould coax a nail out of heart of oak. The man thinks of his buttons; and before he leaves the house, Kitty has been brought to confess that she doesn't know what she *may* do—she may marry, or she may not."

"Is it possible?" we cried, with a laugh.

"Sir," said the Hermit, "'tis not a thing to idly laugh at. Take fifty matches, and be assured of it, if you sift 'em well, out of forty, at least, you'll find buttons in some shape at the bottom of 'em."

"It may be," we said.

"It is," cried the Hermit with emotion. "Asses are led by their noses; men by their buttons."

There was a dead pause. The Hermit had us in a clinch. We felt ourselves beaten, and therefore flung our discourse once more upon swine's flesh. "It is delicious brawn," we cried. "Blessings have fallen upon the man who reared it."

"Perhaps," said the Hermit, with a faint smile, "the fellow knew well how to feed hogs. Understand me; I am no unbeliever in the efficacy of blessings: potent are they, sweetly potent where they fall. Yet, sir, like

all goodness, they are sometimes terribly libelled in the world. I have known men by the very lithesomeness of their backs, and bronze of their faces, get fat and golden. Well, sir, to what have they sworn they owed all their grease and prosperous yellowness ; forsooth, to the blessings that fell upon them—blessings rewardful of their piety. These men, sir, I know it, have in a business way picked pockets, yet have they declared they owed their substance to the untiring fingers of their saints."

"Very like," said we.

"Sir, it *is*," said the Hermit ; "and the brawn before us brings to my memory a little story that may shadow forth this truth. I have noted down the tale, and 'tis there—in that cedar chest, as I have said, with a hundred others. Do not stir ; I think I can remember the little history, without rummaging the papers. I call it—

A Short Story of a Cow and a Sow.

"You were never at Naples, sir ?—No ? Well, I will not commiserate you ; I will not triumph ; I will spare your feelings. Naples ! If, sir, there be a place where a man may forget taxes and all the tribulation of what with great gravity we call civilized life, it is—always excepting my own Clovernook—it is Naples !

"Saint Anthony is a great fellow at Naples : a saint, sir, of the first water. Perhaps, I am wrong in the epithet : water being rarely a test of saints ; monks, who are to saints what porwiggles are to frogs, for the most part abominating that pauper fluid. No matter. Saint Anthony is a great gun at Naples, whatever he may be elsewhere : for saints, like fox-hunting lords of the manor, though they may make a terrible clatter in their own neighbourhood, are sometimes held dirt cheap in other places. Well, sir, Saint Anthony in his mortal days had a kindly yearning, a love, a gentleness, a pity towards everything that lived ; beasts, birds, fishes,

reptiles. What Atticus was to Cicero, Saint Anthony's pig was to Saint Anthony. Great was his power over animals; most melodious, most convincing his speech; as was proved by his sermon to the fishes, which touched them all alike, the hard roes and the soft. Saint Anthony died—but to this day Saint Anthony lives in Naples. Once a year, with reverent care, people bring to him their various four-footed chattels; yea, the two-legged birds, to boot, that they may be soused with water blessed at the shrine of Saint Anthony; the said water being fatal to measles, mange, glanders, pip, and every other malady that walks or flies. Do you laugh, sir? I am sorry for it. Call it superstition if you will; superstition hath uglier blotches than this. There is, to my mind, a fine spirit of humanity in this custom; nay, a beautiful piece of natural religion. Men, who acknowledge its sanctity, thereby acknowledge in the very hog that grunts about them, a something cared for by the Divine Schemer of things: it is a creature, part and parcel of the wondrous whole; a thing to be used tenderly by men, seeing it is not despised by a saint. The water of Saint Anthony, thus sprinkled and falling upon brutes, must cool the pride of human-kind, showing, that although it is the highest piece of heaven's work on this earth, it is not the sole piece. And thus, the peasant taught by the love and benevolence of Saint Anthony towards his horse, is taught a tenderness for the creature which otherwise he had not known. He, Pietro, has his saint to guard and bless him, but—to Pietro's mind—so have Pietro's cows and sheep: and so, the saintly care about all, brings all into a narrower circle.

"Therefore, at Naples, great is Saint Anthony. Fine ladies send their lap-dogs to be sprinkled, and they yelp back with blessings about them. Parrots are soused, and lo! they scream defiance at the pip; and if limited before in their vocabulary, have full soon in their throats a very dictionary.

"Gano was a Neapolitan farmer; a heavy, stupid, yet withal, a most religious man. Not an animal that called him master, that was not sprinkled, once a year, with the water of Saint Anthony: and thereupon, the ewes yeaned twins, the hens never failed of eggs, and multiplication was ever triumphant in his dove-cote! Though Gano could not drive all his stock to the shrine of Saint Anthony, he never failed once a year to purchase of the priest a sufficiency of water, wherewith to sprinkle his property at home; and all things throve with him accordingly.

"Gano had bought a young sow; a spare thing,—but with the blessing of Saint Anthony and plenty to eat, the sow, it was the belief of Gano, would plump and fatten. Gano failed not to drive the sow to Saint Anthony's water, where, at Gano's special intercession, it was doubly sluiced. Gano drove the sow home; and thoughts of ham and bacon, and savoury sausage, sang sweetly in his brain as he meditated upon the blessings of Saint Anthony. Weeks passed away, and nevertheless the sow did not fatten; no, it somewhat pined and shrunk. There was some devil in the pig! So, at least, thought Gano.

"A short while after, Gano bought a cow. Had she been sprinkled by Saint Anthony? No. It was almost no matter; she was so fine a cow, without aspersion. Her black skin was like Genoa velvet; and then so sweet, so gracious a look about the head! More than all, every day she gave a flood of milk. Leagues about there was talk of Gano's cow.

"As it sometimes happens with men, so did it happen with Gano's cow. Just as her fame had spread around, and brought many folks to see her, her merits became less: she began to shrink; and for milk, less and less was drawn from her night and morning. It was well for the faith of Gano that it was so: for looking, as in his infidel moments he had looked, upon the sleek carcase of the cow, the animal unblessed, unsprinkled

by Saint Anthony, and comparing it with the spare condition of the sow that had been washed almost from snout to tail by the efficacious water, Gano—the saints forgive him!—began to consider within himself, whether, after all, Saint Anthony was so indispensable to the health of a farm-yard. Weak, wicked Gano!

"Still the cow dwindled, and as it dwindled, still—it was strange, or rather it was by no means strange—still the sow increased. The cause was plain. The blessings of Saint Anthony were working in the marrow of the swine; the saint was covering its bones with flesh; and in a short time, the wonder and admiration before bestowed upon the cow—were offered to the pig. It was prophesied by some that the cow would die; but it was no matter: the added value of the sow would more than make good the loss; it was so wonderful in its fat—so beautiful, yet mighty in its proportions. Still the sow fattened, and still the cow gave no milk.

"See you not,' said old, pious neighbours to Gano—'see you not the blessings of good Saint Anthony? How have they descended upon the swine! whilst for that unblessed, misbegotten cow—cut her throat, burn, consume her; otherwise she will bring a curse upon your cattle, and blight upon your crops.' Gano felt the rebuke; acknowledged the evil dwelling in the cow, the goodness fattening in the swine. If the cow should die, it would be a just punishment on her presumptuous owner.

"Matters went on, and even the fame of Saint Anthony increased with the fat of the sow. Never had the saint's water been so highly prized. At length, the true cause of the sow's fatness was discovered; and thus it was.

"Very early one morning, Gano rose, and going to where the cow was stalled, saw the sow lying on its fat belly beneath the cow, with the teat in its mouth, milking, milking with all its might, and grunting complacently at the larceny!

"Gano, though astounded, and on the instant suspicious

of the truth, said nothing to his neighbours. It might have been the first time that the sow had so behaved itself. He would wait and watch. He did so: and six mornings, at the same hour, he saw the sow in the same place, milking, milking, and grunting the while! Almost every ounce of swine's fat was due to the cow. The neighbours had sworn that the sow had prospered by the peculiar blessings of Saint Anthony. Alas! the sow had flourished upon stolen milk.

"Now, sir," said the Hermit, "is there no lesson in this little story? Teaches it nothing?"

"We think we apprehend its drift," was our answer.

"Sir, in your world—for in Clovernook we know no such animals—many are the fat swine, and only fat at the expense of poor, defrauded cattle."

"It may be," we replied.

"May be, sir? Ha! I know it is," said the Hermit: "and of all sorts of fatness, that is the vilest, the coarsest, which owes its grossness to hypocrisy. You shall see a man rich in pocket and poor in soul. He goes to his church, and owns himself, to his passing condescension by the way, a miserable sinner; he returns homeward, and proves himself to be so, albeit the proof never strikes him, by spurning the Sabbath-beggar at his threshold. This man was never known to do a large goodness. Neither was any positive, legal wickedness proved against him. No: he never grumbles at the church rates, for once a week he is decorously placed in his comfortable pew. He pays his way, and can show stamped receipts as vouchers for the goodwill he bears towards all men. He is a Christian; for one of his godfathers now alive can testify to his baptism; nay, he has the register among other precious family documents. Hence, if he be wealthy, why, riches have descended upon him as the bounty rewarding his virtues. His own goodness has been turned into a benison. And he has oppressed no one? He has wronged no one? He has not armed himself with an unjust, though an allowed usage to add

to his hoards—to increase his wealth? Alas, sir, alas!" cried the Hermit, "against how many such men, may the accusing spirit some day thunder forth, 'Stolen milk!'"

We were about to venture some rejoinder when the door was gently opened, and a negro child, as he appeared, about ten years old, glided in, and made up to the Hermit, presenting to him a velvet cap, and a staff of the whitest ivory.

"My little boy, sir," said the Hermit; and the child gently nodded to us, as pleased with the words of his master. "This is my hour for a walk: will you use your legs? Or, if it please you better, will you stay and read? Bezoar will show you my book-room." We at once preferred to accompany our host. "Farewell, child; and let me hear good words of you," said the Hermit, tenderly laying his hand upon the little woolly head. Saying this, the Hermit donned his cap, grasped his ivory staff, and courteously showed us from the cell. Our curiosity was immediately aroused by the little negro. Our host observed this in our looks, and said—"Yes; a fine little boy, and from a curious place, too. You shall hear something of him as we walk. This way, by your leave: it is a solitary by-road, and winds to the top of yonder hill; whence you may look down upon Clovernook, lying lamb-like and quiet at the bottom." Saying this, the Hermit turned to the left from his orchard, a large sheep-dog bounding after him, and leaping about him, and barking loudest gladness. "Gently, Colin, gently," said the Hermit; and the dog thrust his nose into his master's hand, and taking a deep snuff, was on the instant quiet, and falling behind, walked gravely as a court follower.

"And the little black boy's name is Bezoar?" said we, urging the promised story.

"Bezoar," answered the Hermit; who, after a pause, continued. "He is older than his looks; and his brain is still the oldest part about him. He comes

from a curious place, unknown I believe to any traveller, but myself. Do you know much of geography, sir?"

We answered, and, we fear, without a blush, "Nothing."

"Your ignorance will spare me some description. Let it suffice to you, that the birthplace of Bezoar is an unknown tract—unknown to all but myself—somewhere in Japan. At one time of my life, I drove a large trade in Dutch dolls. I travelled to Japan with my merchandise, and making my way to the Emperor's court, became an especial favourite by means of my ware. The poor people had never before beheld a doll: and as my dolls were the first sort fashioned to open and shut their eyes, and emit certain sounds from the mouth—the invention has, I have heard, been shamelessly copied in France—they were considered in that strange, uncivilised country, as things of almost greater worth than mere men and women; henceforth, they who would prosper in the sight of the Emperor, became as nearly as was allowed to them, like unto dolls. The greater the doll, the finer the courtier. I soon disposed of all my goods, which being limited in supply, carried any price. I really believe, so great was the passion, that some wives would have parted with their husbands for dolls; and am almost convinced that husbands might have been found who would have changed their living, ogling, talking spouses, for mere machines of painted wood that only opened their eyes, and sounded a few sounds, when the wires were pulled for such purpose. I became a great favourite with the Emperor; and protected and authorised by his letter—it was embroidered in letters of gold on violet-coloured satin—roamed everywhere."

"But what we want"—

The Hermit stopped dead at the unseemly interruption. With a sweet smile on his face, he shook his head, and leaning on his staff, looked in our eyes. "Once upon a

time, do you know what patience wanted?" asked he of Bellyfulle.

We confessed our ignorance.

"She wanted a nightingale. Well, sir, patience waited, and the egg sang."

We bowed to the soft rebuke, and promised to hold our peace. The Hermit continued.

"As I said, I roamed where I would. In my wanderings, I fell among a strange sort of people; strange in this way. Though the people were divided into an equal number of white and black, there was no pride of colour in the fair, no humiliation in the sooty. All were alike."

"And how was this compassed?" we asked, unable to suppress the question.

"There ran a legend in the country that it had not always been so, but that the blessing—for so the people called it—had been brought about by one of their demigods as I could understand, a sort of Japanese Prometheus. The blacks—people will tell you there are no blacks in Japan; you have my full authority to contradict them—had been hardly used: stripped, mutilated, sold, made merchandise of, as in other places black flesh has been, and is. The land was cursed with the wickedness: on one side there was stony-hearted arrogance; on the other, agony, debasement. Well, the Japanese God changed this; and how? One morning—a time answering to our 1st of May—all who had gone to bed as negroes, rose as white men; and the white got up blacks For a whole twelvemonth, sir," said the Hermit of Bellyfulle, "I was myself a black man."

"Impossible!" we cried; but a glance from the Hermit subdued us into a look of belief.

"A black man," repeated the anchorite, gently striking his ivory staff upon the ground; "and, the year past, I became of my first colour. And this, sir, is the case with all the dwellers in that country. Each party takes the colour of each for one twelvemonth. One year black, one white."

"When the change was first ordered," said we, "it must have astounded the better people."

"It was a fine lesson, sir; a fine practical teaching of humility. And after all, what is it at this moment going on in that very remote province of Japan, what is it more than you figure to yourselves in the world you come from? The Japanese divinity did but anticipate the work of the future. Men, I mean Christian men, do not imagine to themselves angels of different coloured skins: they do not conceive the notion of black cherubim. Grave-dust, that truest fullers'-earth, surely takes out the negro stain. I take it, sir,"—and the Hermit paused in his walk, and closing his hands, let his staff fall in his arms,—"I take it, sir, we all rise alike?"

We said nothing; and for a few minutes the Hermit, resuming his pace, was silent. He then observed, and we thought in a somewhat pensive tone, "The pretty boy at the cell—yes, sir, I call him pretty—was a native of the strange land I have spoken of. I have seen that jetty boy white as the whitest English maiden. He was an orphan when I brought him away!"

"And at that time in his year of black?" we ventured to ask.

"Yes, sir," answered the Hermit; not observing, or not condescending to observe, a tone of levity that, struggle as we would, broke from us: for sooth to say, we thought the Hermit—as doubtless the reader will think — either pleasantly jesting or pleasantly mad. "Yes, sir," said the sage of Bellyfulle, "he was then black. He has never changed since."

"We can well believe it," was our avowal.

"It was my hope—otherwise I had never brought the dear child from his delightful land—the paradise of the world, sir! every single grape there is big as a walnut: it was my hope, had the change from black to white gone on, that the world might have been instructed. As it is, sir, were I simply to publish the truth, 'twould be taken as a traveller's story."

"Just so," said we. "For there are some distant truths that, however beautiful, will not bear a voyage. You may carry ice to the Indies, if you carefully stow it; but travellers, sir, sometimes find their best of truths melt by the way."

As we came to a turning of the path, we met one of the villagers of Clovernook; as I afterwards found, an old man, who, in the outside world, had been a planter, and the owner of a thousand slaves. He had left nearly all his wealth behind him, and by the greatest luck had escaped to the village; there, in its sweet serenity, to peep into the holes and corners of his soul, and blow the worldly dust out of them, as the housewife blows and dusts her best china. And, indeed, such care had been most necessary. He was, as the Hermit afterwards told me, a sharp-faced, wan, edgy kind of man when he set out for Clovernook, with a restless anxiety of eye, and quick, whistling kind of speech. When we saw him, there was a look of gentleness in his old face, and his eye shone deeply, yet tranquilly, and he spoke with a sweet cheerful gravity—the natural tone of good old age.

"A good day and many," said the Hermit to the old man. "You will find your scholar at the Cell, Master Simon." And the old man, smiling, and gently bowing, without a word, passed on.

"What scholar do you speak of, may we ask?" said we.

"Bezoar, the black boy," answered the Hermit. "Master Simon teaches him chess."

"Chess! a planter, and an owner of a thousand negroes, teach a black boy chess!" we cried.

"'Tis a pretty game," said the Hermit, not attending to the contrast we had ventured,—"a pretty game; and serves to remind us, here in Clovernook, that there are such things as kings and queens, and blazoned braying state. That there are—or have been knights, sworn to do manly service, and alack! too often for-

getting the vow. That there are — yes, still are— castles, strongholds of wrong — prison fastnesses for feeble innocence. That there still exist — we know them not in Clovernook—worthy, pious bishops, pulpy and rich as pine-apples. Kings, queens, knights, bishops, and castles!" cried the Hermit. "How few the syllables! Yet in this world what an uproar have they made! How much wickedness and suffering, and violence, and stone-blind bigotry—if we read the history of this dear old mother earth—Gracious Heavens," cried the Hermit lifting his hand, "what daily Neroes are we to her! What multiplied, and still multiplying evils may all be written down in five small words! Kings, queens, knights, bishops, castles! What a significant short-hand is here, my master," said the Hermit, and he shook his head, and stalked freshly onward.

We followed him in silence along the path that, with gentle acclivity, wound around the hill. Beautiful was the way! Myrtles, geraniums, and a thousand odoriferous shrubs blossomed and breathed about us. No dead leaf was seen; no withered twig deformed the place; no slug, no snail, crawled in the path. Barefooted Venus might have trod the grass, it was so soft, so clean, so delicate. Seats, and banks, and mossy green alcoves were formed at various distances, along the way; places of rest and shelter from the sun and shower. "Here," said the Hermit, pausing—"here is the Grotto of the Cup and Cake;" he then turned aside, and entering what seemed to us the mouth of a cavern, bade us follow. We obeyed, and in a few moments stood in a circular grotto, into which the light through various crannies, cunningly fashioned, found its way; falling upon a myriad of shells of rainbow tints, that flashed and glowed about us, burning in the air. We heard the creeping of a spring, and guided by the sound, saw it falling in a thousand silver threads from a corner of the roof. An old man, clothed in white

linen, received us. We shall never forget the benignity of his aspect. He was above the middle height; his face was pale as moonshine; his eyes of a bright grey, and his hair and beard were white as thistle-down. "Here is a man," thought we, "whose life has been a long task of holiness." He approached us, with a large shell-goblet in one hand, and a small basket of cakes in the other. "Drink," said the Hermit, handing us the vessel.

"Is it water?" cried we.

"Almost: mere noontide tipple," answered the Sage of Bellyfulle. "I call it the Etcetra Cordial. Harmless as mouse's milk, sir. A nun might see the bottom of the cup, yet see no worse for't. We are now at half-way distance from the summit of the hill. Here every villager halts, and takes the cup and cake. Then, with strengthened hams, plods onward. Some cakes?" and the Hermit presented the basket. "They are made by a French Duchess; a dweller in the village below. She bought the secret at, I cannot say what price, from a cardinal, her confessor.

"Have the cakes any name?" we asked.

With a slight movement of the left eyelid, the Hermit answered—"Maids'-lips."

We drank and ate, then followed the Hermit from the Grotto of the Cup. "And who may be our host?" we asked. "Some man of lifelong piety and worth, no doubt?"

"In the outside world," said the Hermit; "for 'tis thus we ever speak of the cannibal country you come from, he kept a gin-shop, in close propinquity to the Old Bailey. In his time he has been thrice fined by the excise for having, accidentally no doubt, certain compounds in his house, to give, as the wickedness of mankind imputed, an unlawful vivacity to his liquors. That man has seen much of the world, and from an eminence not enjoyed by all men."

"What eminence?" we asked.

"The pillory," answered the Hermit. "For one hour did he twirl before the faces of a mocking, egg-flinging generation; and at length descended from his altitude a changed man."

"No doubt," said we.

"He was set up a false-swearing publican, and came down a philosopher. In one hour did he see the vanity, the folly, the wicked violence of the world. In the midst of men he was apart from them: his moral feelings drew themselves inward like the horns of snails. Whilst twirling round like a pig at the spit, with abominable odours at his nostrils, and the hubbub of vulgar malice in his ears, the poor man's soul retreated into itself, and shutting his eyes upon the mob about him—he had good reason for that, sir—he saw with the better vision of penitent hope, an abiding-place like this of Clovernook; a sanctuary from his world of adulteration and short measure. Released by Mr. John Ketch—ha, sir! we have a hangman in Clovernook"—

"Is it possible?" we cried in great astonishment.

"One who was a hangman. Here, his duty is to prune trees, and kill pigs. Released, the publican turned his heels upon the world, and—his lucky star guiding him hither—he became the host of the Cup and Cake. His office is to supply the villagers of Clovernook with bite and sup, when it pleases them to rest at the Grotto. Employed in this duty, he never speaks; but at the 'Gratis,' sir, he is a talking fellow, and will chirrup a song like a cricket."

"How beautiful!" we exclaimed; for the Hermit's talk had carried us to the top of the hill. High bushes had, for some distance, shut out the view of the village beneath, so that making a sudden turn, the scene burst in all its unfolded loveliness upon us. At the summit was a wide, long marble seat canopied with trees of willow and acacia. We sat down, and revelled in our very heart, as we gazed about, below us.

"You are now," said the Hermit, "on the top of

Gossip Hill ; and there at our feet, sparkling like an emerald in the sun, lies Clovernook. Now, sir," cried the Hermit, and his face fell into shadow, "I have seen nearly all the granite and marble triumphs of the world : all the structures set up by the vanity of man to dare time to do its worst. And I have never looked at those mighty conquests of stone—those altars where men may venerate the might and grandeur of human labour—that I have not been saddened by the thought, the idle fancy, that the very blood and marrow of men, victims of lawless rule, cemented the blocks before me. I have looked at the Pyramids, and seen ten thousand thousand ghostly faces staring on me : yea, the whole mass has seemed to me the petrified bones of a thousand, thousand slaves. Antiquity cannot take out the blood-mark : philosophy, or what has quicker vision, sympathy, may still behold the stain ; the winds of centuries cannot bleach it. I have galloped over the Appian Way, and my horse's hoofs have spurned what to my eyes was once the flesh of outraged man."

"Kindred thoughts," said we, "might give expression, animation, to every brick of every city."

"Certainly," said the Hermit, "if men would so consider it. What is Saint Paul's ? A mass of stone, no more, to the tens of thousands that crawl, or lounge, or jerk, or hurry by it. Such it seems: but what is it, looking with thoughtful eyes? Why, a multitude of building activities. We look again : labour has ceased ; the fabric is done ; and the harmony of the work steals into our brain like the voice of a sweet singer."

"Even so," said we. "And thus the quietude of the scene about us takes possession of the soul, and soothes it down to gentleness and peace."

"Sir," cried the Hermit, "Corinth, Babylon, Palmyra, what city you will, was never so fair a sight as that village at our foot. A handful of its thatch is more than worth the brazen gates of Thebes. Its very chimney smoke rises to my nostrils, like the sweet odour of a sacrifice. And

wherefore is it thus? What should make that little span of earth, with its few cottages, simple as swallows'-nests—what should give to that village worth and majesty not found in cities? Why, sir, the human goodness that sanctifies it. There the hearth-gods are gentleness and truth. There, man is not a lie to man; a daily shuffler, an allowed hypocrite, who, ostrich-like, hides his head in a bush of expediency, and thinks the angels see not his plumes of vanity fluttering about him. There, a creed is not a best coat, to be only worn upon certain days, lest it should be worn out: no, sir, it is the every-day working-garment; and odd enough to say—a strange thing not credible in your outside world—the more the said coat is worn, the better and the brighter it becomes; and so," said the Hermit with a grave voice and an upward look, "and so to the end, until it is so bright, so beautiful, it seems to catch a lustre from approaching heaven."

The Hermit paused, and for some moments we both sat in silence contemplating the scene around and beneath us. At length we observed, gazing down upon the village,—"Its beauty seems to grow upon us."

"Yes," said the Hermit; "for the two devils, Hypocrisy and Selfishness, those everywhere fiends of your world, have never entered there."

"Indeed they travel," said we.

"Why, with you," cried the Hermit, "they are as the universal Pan. Take me—in fancy, only, mark me—into your world, and tell me a sound that is not mixed with their voices, even though it may be a bishop's whisper; show me a thing they will not spot, even though it be a bishop's lawn. Why, they are the twin deities, or devilries of your earth; they shout from the house-tops; they creak in carriage-wheels; they ring in the change of the shopkeeper: and with placid faces, I much fear it, they lay their hands above their fungus hearts, and cry 'content' and 'non-content,' and 'ay' and 'no,' in Lords and Commons."

"Indeed, sir," said we, "this is bitterness."

"Ha! ha!" and the Hermit laughed; "that's an old complaint." Then turning full upon us, the Sage of Bellyfulle, with a twinkling of the eye common to him when hit by some quaint thought, asked—"When the world was very young, do you know where Truth lived? Doubtless. In a well; that is a story, old almost as the stars. And there she dwelt, and the water of the well was in such high repute, men would use no drop of any other. And so they drank it, they washed their faces with it, cooked and scoured with it. There was no water like that from the well of Truth. Time plodded on, and the knaves, and the knaves' puppets, fools, vowed that the water became worse and worse, unfit for man or beast. It was brackish, foul, filthy, sulphurous; indeed, what was it not? Men refused even to wash their hands with it. No housewife would boil her lentils in it. Men, temperate men, qualified their wine with it; and after, swore it was the water that gave them the headache. Shepherds watered their flocks at the well, and, as the shepherds declared, the sheep fell into the rot. No man could say a good word for the water of the well of Truth; it was *so bitter* no man could stomach it. Whereupon the people took counsel, and determined to expel Truth from the well, some old varlets declaring that they knew the time when the well was most sweet and medicinal; but then it was before Truth had been permitted to take up her abode in it. It was Truth, and Truth only that had made the stream so shockingly bitter. And so, with one accord, they hauled Truth by the hair of her beautiful and immortal head from the well, and turned her naked upon the earth, to find shelter where she might. Of course, in her nude condition, she could not appear in cities. Nevertheless, though she herself was abused and driven to rocks and desert places, her well has maintained her name; and so for thousands of years men have drunk at what they called Truth's Well, only Truth

was out. Certain it is, now and then she comes and takes up her old abiding-place ; and then do good people, who have unwarily taken a mouthful of the water, spit it out again, and with wry faces, and shuddering anatomies, cry,—'How very bitter !' Sometimes, too, Truth, to get the poor devil a bad name, will wander like a stray gnat into his ink-bottle ! Miserable scribbler ! Branded, tattooed worse than any New Zealander with his own goose-quill. Virtuous, honest, benevolent people who love their species, that is, the Adam and Eve of the printing-office, the race of men and women in good bold type, for they care not so much about the living vulgarities ; they scream like a lady at a loaded pistol, or rather like a thumb-sucking baby at aloes, at the man of bitter ink ; it is so very bitter."

"Truly, sir," said we, "'tis not a profitable liquid to him who uses it."

"Sir," cried the Hermit, "I have much to say upon ink ; but for the present, I will give you some brief advice. I know not your condition, nor do I seek to know it : you may be in the fulness of wealth and felicity. Nevertheless, sir, fortune, to try you, may compel you to be an author. You may, sir, live by self-consumption."

"How, sir ? " we asked.

"Did you ever see a crowd of monkeys in a cage ? Answer ; and I will tell you what I mean by self-consumption. You have seen the animals ? "

"Often," we replied.

"There is, I believe, a disease among monkeys ; a horrid, morbid appetite which pricks the creature to nibble, and bite away his own tail."

"We have observed it," was our answer.

"Sir," cried the anchorite, "I've seen monkeys that have had the fit so very strong upon them, that their tails have been bitten short to the buttock—left with scarcely a stump for pity to weep over. What, think you, among the tribe of monkeys were these animals with self-eaten tails ? "

We could not tell.

"Alas! sir," cried the Hermit of Bellyfulle, "they were authors. And now, sir, let me for a moment speak of ink. I will, for an instant, do you the injury to imagine you an author. Now, sir, if you would keep a fair reputation, and not have dirty water thrown upon you, in the name of virtue, by moralists from attics—not be squirted at in the cause of benevolence by sensitive folks, who can scarcely spell the syllables that stand for the virtue, avoid bitter ink as you would shun the small-pox. No, sir: dip your pen in a mild, sweet fluid; and if you will attend to my instructions, in this manner you will make it."

The Hermit cleared his throat, and seizing our right hand between his palms, and looking intently at us, spoke with an earnestness that played along our heart-strings. He began:—

"A way to make profitable ink:—Seek a she-ass, with a week-old foal, that has been foaled at the fall of the moon, for the moon is much to be considered in this matter. Go out at midnight, and milk the ass into a skillet that hath never been tainted with aught but oat-meal porridge. Whilst you milk, softly carol, 'Sing a song of sixpence,' 'Little Jack Horner,' or any other innocuous ballad. Put the milk by, and in the morning stir it with a pigeon's feather. Add to the milk the yolk of three phœnix' eggs. Boil it over a fire of cinnamon sticks, and then put to it an ounce of virgin honey, made by bees that never had a sting. Be particular in this, or the ink will be spoiled. When this is done, put by the mixture until the first of April. It matters not how long it may be till then, for the phœnix' eggs, when you have obtained them, will keep the milk sweet for ever. Well, on the first of April, before breaking your fast, take the milk and strain it carefully through the nightcap of your grandmother. If you have not a grandmother of your own, borrow a neighbour's. In three days the ink will be as good as ever it will be for use."

"And this," said we, "is the way to make a profitable compound?"

"You perceive," said the Hermit, "there is nothing bitter in the ingredients. Some of your critics might drink of the ink, as though it was their own mother's milk. Profitable, did you ask? Why there is sweetest sorcery in the ink. You have only to dip your pen into it, and whatever you write will be all that is mild and beautiful. There will be no wrong, no wickedness in this world—at least, by the grace of the ink, there will be none in your picture of it,—but it will be a world of unmixed virtues. Your ink will never then be led into the unprofitable knack of calling selfishness and villany by their proper names, but you will wink and let them 'trot by.' Every man will appear to you—at least your ink will make you swear he does—like Momus's man, with a pane of glass in his breast, and behind the glass, a ruddy angel! All the injustice of life—the wickedness that man in his sorry ignorance inflicts upon his neighbour, will be instinctively avoided by you; the while the injustice grows, and the wickedness triumphs, and you, with your sweet and profitable ink, have helped to cast no shame upon the abomination! And you will put all the world in holiday attire; the beggar-girl will be dressed in sarsnet and tiffany, and ploughmen themselves wear smock-frocks of white satin. And so doing, you will win the good word of those who never think for themselves—a large class, sir; and of those—almost as large—who think falsely for other people. You will be amiable, good, kind, far-seeing, deep-seeing, and you will not be bitter!"

"Truly, sir, the ink that will do this," said we, "is a golden gift."

"It has been found so," said the Hermit. "And now, sir, let me show you Clovernook and its population. Place these upon your nose, and look about you." With this, the Hermit gave us a pair of spectacles. The glasses were in a frame of heavy brass-work, curiously

overwrought with strange, odd marks. Looking at them, we asked, "What may these denote?"

"I cannot tell," answered the Hermit. "They were the work of a Portuguese philosopher. The Inquisition found a gallantee-show in his house, and burnt him for a wizard. I bought the spectacles of his widow: she was blind, or, I take it, had never sold them. You will find them curious glasses."

Marvellous, in truth! Putting them on, the whole of the village was brought in wonderful distinctness to us. Though Gossip Hill was of exceeding height, and at least two miles distant from Clovernook, yet so strong was the power of the spectacles, that we could distinguish the white throats of the young martens thrust from the nests built beneath the cottage eaves; could see the tints of the houseleek on the cottage roofs, the colours and small threads of lichen on the church tower. "Wonderful—wonderful!" we cried.

"They are good glasses," said the Hermit—"very good. I have sat here, and looked through them so often, that I know every flaw and weather-stain on every roof and wall. Yet, some eyes they will not suit. Can you see the hour by the church clock?"

"The hour!" we cried. "Nay, we can see a fly upon the minute-hand."

"What is the fly about?" asked the Hermit, musingly.

"Nothing," we answered. "It is motionless."

"And the hand moves towards the hour? Is the fly still there?" asked the sage.

"Still there," said we.

"And still idle! Ha, my son," and the Hermit sighed, "how many of us are no other than lazy flies upon the hand of time? What other thing do you see?"

"A pair of daws. One of them has just flown up with stolen goods in its beak."

"The wicked one!" said the Hermit with a laugh. "Robs poor villagers, and yet lives in a church. They

are old sinners, sir, those daws; I know them. They 'd take tithe of wool from a day-old lamb, and the one chicken from a widow's one hen. Yet there they haunt and roost in their grave black, and bring scandal upon our dear old church by the rapacity of their ways." And then the Hermit smiled, and was silent. After a pause he asked, "What think you of our church of Clovernook?"

"Very beautiful," said we, "in its sweet simplicity;" for the doors were open, and we could see the whole interior of the building. "It looks the abode of peace and truth."

"Ay, it does, sir. Yet there is an old legend that in former times there was fierce strife in that little church. The quarrel is known as the schism of the Blue and Black. It was thus, sir:—The parson died; and when another parson was to be chosen, many of the congregation declared they would give ear to no preacher whose eyes were not blue. No grace could flow from a pastor with black eyes. Other of the people were as resolute on the contrary. They held blue eyes to be heretical, unbelieving, and typical of burning sulphur: hence, they would have black eyes in the parson, and none other."

"And how," we asked, "was the dispute accommodated?"

"In this wise: as neither party would give way, two persons were chosen. When Blue Eyes preached in the morning, Black Eyes held forth in the afternoon. Thus both congregations were equally satisfied, and, let us hope it, equally blessed."

"Do you believe this foolish tale?" we asked.

"There are people who call it fabulous—the gossip of fiction. I cannot say what happened in Clovernook, but I will tell you what I once saw in the land of the Mogul. There, sir, there were certain bonzes or priests, who, like the twirling dervises you may have heard of, were wont to show their devotion by spinning, like tops,

in white gowns. Suddenly there came other dervises, who spun in black gowns; then others came, who spun in yellow raiment; others in scarlet; others in purple. And every colour had its champions and apostles; and there were many foul words, and a little foul play, exchanged among them. The tumult convulsed the land—every party vowing to fight to the death for the one colour. When I left the country, it was torn to pieces by the separate factions of the separate coloured gowns. After some years I returned, and found the whole land in peace; and how, sir, think you, was amity restored? A great man—a man of genius and benevolence—arose, and he combined all the opposite colours into one stedfast, admiring body of himself; for he, looking upon any colour as of no matter, if the twirling were good—if the spinning were sincere—he, the meek and easy man, spun in something very like a harlequin's jacket."

"A pagan philosopher," said we.

"There was some thought, some suggestive wisdom, in this harlequin humour. The light that blesses us, is poured upon us in one white stream from the everlasting fount; and yet it is a light of many colours. Alas, my son!" cried the sage, "what a place would this be, if the many-coloured creeds of this world did not, by Almighty goodness, make the white light of the world to come!"

The Hermit paused, and we continued to survey the interior of the church. "Beautifully simple," said we; "no stained glass: no gold-fringed, gold-tasseled pulpit cushion; and no pews."

"Why, no," said the Hermit, "no pews. In your world, I have puzzled myself to think what kind of place your stickling pew-holders must paint to themselves when they imagine heaven? A place with pews? With a better sort of velvet—softer seats—more harmonious hinges to the doors—white, cloud-like hassocks?"

"They can have no such thoughts," cried we.

"Why not?" asked the Hermit briskly. "Nay,

they must. What *is*, or should be, a church to the mind of the worshipper, but as the porch to eternity ; wherein he stands, pondering the terrible mystery within him : a place set apart from the sordid cares and crimes of the world, where, shaking the dust from his soul, he hopes, fears, dreads, prays for an angelic change ?—He is at the outer door of the dread Future ; and shall he there whine like a canting beggarman at the threshold ? Tell lies of sores and wretchedness ? shall he call himself a worm, yet, in the pride of his maggot heart, enshrine himself in a cabinet, shrinking from the neighbourhood of brother crawlers ? Think you," said the Hermit, "that men will rise in pews ? I fear me not."

Again the Hermit paused. "What think you of our churchyard ?" he asked. "You see, there are no cypresses ; no weeping willows ; no undertaker yews ; but sweet, odorous shrubs and orange trees, with bud, blossom, and the ripe fruit ; types of those who lie below."

"And no epitaphs ?" said we.

"Nor naked skulls, nor cross-bones carved in stone ; nor cherub cheeks, with marble tears ; nor aught of the gimcrackery of woe that libels death, making the deliverer horrible. Beneficent death ! In the churchyards of your outside world he sits like a blood-smeared Indian, counting his scalps. And then, your tombstones ! What a multitude of contrary counsel—of creed-denying misery is there ! I have walk among them ; and fancy has given to them features, expression ; the embodied voice and feeling of the written thing. Why one howls, 'worms and darkness,' in the desolation of despair ; one with wailing, shivering voice, cries—'the cold, cold grave ;' another gnashes its teeth at the 'tyrant death.' And are these the looks, the voices, the words of hope—the words of the faith the men professed to die in ? It would be more than curious," said the Hermit, in a solemn tone, "if the spirits of the dead might write their own epitaphs."

The deep earnestness of the Hermit's manner made us

gaze at him. It was strange; but he appeared to us almost a double man. His face seemed to lose its fleshly, full-fed, laughing look, when he talked in this wise—and was refined and animated; wholly redeemed from its vinous aspect by the seriousness of his discourse. At his cell, he seemed to us the champion and the genius of creature-comforts—the true and doughty Hermit of Bellyfulle; and now discoursing of death, his wrongs, and the fopperies cast upon him, the Hermit appeared as one who had castigated his spirit in the wilderness.

"Is it not strange," asked the Hermit, "that men should seek for skulls and bones, and turned-down torches, to make them feel the true solemnity of death? These things are to the imagination what strong liquors are to the blood. They confuse the sense of truth. Can there be a more beautiful or more hopeful memento of the dead, than the mere heap of earth that covers them? Lovely, pregnant earth! Teeming with life! Holding in its dusty bed the colour and the sweetness of the future amaranth! And yet in your world, you place a skull and cross-bones over dead men's clay, and write up desolate sentences of worms and darkness; of terror and the fell destroyer; as though the wailing spirit of the dead cried from beneath. Verily, sir," said the Hermit, "the tombstones of a Christian churchyard do at times jangle with the sweet spirit of Christianity. I have looked at them with pity; may I be pardoned the emotion! sometimes with slight resentment."

"The graves beneath us are covered with herbs and flowers. None osier-bound," said we.

"Look at the wall, there, to the right," said the Hermit.

We looked, and saw a long row of bee-hives. "Bees hived in a churchyard!" we cried, astonished.

"Every grave," said the Hermit, "is planted with thyme and other herbs; with flowers, that the bees most love. The whole village is supplied with honey,

sucked, elaborated from the churchyard. There, my bones will lie. And there the bees will work, and working, sing above them. To my heathen mind a sweeter, a more hopeful music, than dolorous words of worms and darkness, chipped by stone-cutter."

"Bees hived in a place of graves!" we repeated. "'Tis a strange fancy."

"Call it what you will," said the Hermit, "we leave it to your outside world to seek for sighs and groans, and tribulation, in your burying places. The villagers of Clovernook—great happiness is it that it is so—seek nought but honey from the churchyard."

"Who is that—the sexton?" we asked, seeing an old hale man, with mattock and axe, enter at the gate.

"Our sexton," said the Hermit. "In your world, he was a man of pills; a most potent, money-seeking quack. His penance, here, is to dig graves. With you, it may be said, he employed journeymen."

"He was known as the sexton's friend. But," said we, "you have several times spoken of penance. Are all the dwellers of Clovernook vowed to penance for the follies or the worse guilt of their former lives?"

"Assuredly," said the Hermit. "Save the few children born here, nearly all the men and women of Clovernook take some self-imposed task, to cleanse themselves of past foulness, past folly. I had forgotten," said the Hermit, rising, "I ought first to have shown you THE VALLEY OF NAPS."

"The Valley of Naps," we cried; "what place is that?"

"It lies on the other side of the Hill, between this and the village. By that valley all who come from your world to end their lives in Clovernook, are made to enter. Here," said the Hermit, turning his back upon the village, and following a narrow, winding path—"here you may see something of it. Look," said the Hermit, and he pointed downwards to a dark speck of wood. "Your spectacles will serve you little here. That

black blot of trees—that is the entrance to the Valley of Naps. When the traveller arrives there, he puts up at The Warming-Pan—the only hostelry in the Valley. The landlord is said to have been a Lord Chancellor in his day; and his servants customs and excise officers. The traveller is shown to bed, and after a nap of some six months, he rises, puts on new clothes, and having left his old face at the Shrine of the Looking-Glass, sets forward to Clovernook."

"Dear sir," we cried, "explain all this. What do you mean? How can a man leave his face?"

"Why, sir," asked the eremite, "think you that Clovernook would be the Paradise it is, if its villagers had brought their wordly visages with them? Oh, most beautiful and most foul is the human countenance! A page, writ with sunny characters—a greasy, dirty, dog's-eared leaf! Are there not faces, with every trace of divinity *thought out* of them? Faces, with quick, hungry, subtle eyes; and cheeks and brows, lined and cut as with the sharp edges of sixpences? Have you walked the streets of cities and not beheld such faces? If so, believe it, you have dull eyes. Well, the people bound for Clovernook leave the raiment of the outer world at the Warming-Pan; and with it their natures as deformed and warped in the world they have quitted. Then they call at the Shrine of the Looking-Glass, and take a last peep of their worldly faces. They look into the mirror, and looking, leave all the black lines, the wrinkles of calculation, the pallor and sallowness of sorrow in the glass, and step forward with faces happy, bright, and beaming as from a talk with angels."

"And, of course, never again visit the Valley of Naps?" said we.

"Yes, indeed," said the Hermit, "and have solemn sport there. I have told you, that every traveller leaves at the Warming-Pan his coarse and sordid worldly nature with his old clothes. Well, every New Year's

Eve, these past natures, these phantasma of the world without, appear in the cast raiment, and are invited by the purified villagers of Clovernook, their past owners. There is, I have said, much sport there; and it happens after this fashion. Although everybody beside knows the shadow, the ghost of the past, to be the past property of the man upon whom the spectre fixes itself; yet does the amended man himself deny the phantom; endeavouring by all means to put it off upon any other of his fellows. It is strange sport to see how ghosts are bandied about; like unacknowledged paupers in the world you come from."

"But the villagers of Clovernook," said we, "do not forget their former doings?"

"On the contrary," replied the Hermit, "they have a quick, most curious knowledge of their past lives, save on the solemnity of New Year's Eve; and then, for the time, do they forget all things. You see our sexton there"—for by this time we had returned to our seat, looking down upon Clovernook,—"there was rare sport with him at Shadow Fair."

"Shadow Fair!" we echoed. "Is that the name of the festival held in the Valley of Naps?"

"It is; and the sexton went, with others, last New Year's Eve. He was immediately owned by his ghost, the phantasm, the slough of his moral self left at the Warming-Pan. The ghost was a long, thin-faced ghost, with a bit of mangy hair on the upper lip. The ghost made up to the sexton, who immediately took to his heels, the ghost following him, and pelting him with the spectres of his own pills, as people pelt one another with sugar-plums at a carnival. There was great sport, I can tell you. The pills—the ghost seemed to have myriads of them in his coat-pockets,—fell in showers about the sexton, the ghost straining its thin voice, and calling out that the sexton could not take too many of them. Where the pills fell, poisonous fungus, small toadstools, with bolus heads, came up, killing everything around."

"And will the poor sexton suffer the same pelting next New Year's Eve?" we asked.

"Assuredly," said the Hermit.

"May he not have better wisdom than to visit Shadow Fair?" said we.

"He cannot choose," replied the Hermit. "It is the inevitable fate of every villager of Clovernook, to go every New Year's Eve to the Valley of Naps."

"What! is death in the village?" we asked, seeing the sexton doff his coat, and begin delving.

"Yes. A villager died three days ago. He was ninety-three, and this day week—yes, this day week—he played at cricket."

"And who is that old man," we asked, "with long white hair, at the bottom of the hill, peeping and prying into the hedge?"

"He, sir, was a sharp attorney; a very keen tool, indeed, in your world," said the Hermit; "but here he spends his days in picking cotton blight and canker from the trees, and freeing flies from cobwebs."

"And here comes a gay, thin-faced old man, with a wooden leg."

"He was a great general—a very mighty general; he has killed his thousands, and knocked down cities by the dozen. And now, what think you, does he in Clovernook? Why, every evening he waits in the skittle-ground of the 'Gratis' to set up the nine-pins. The rest of his time he employs in snaring jays, daws, and magpies; and when he has taught them to cry '*Peace, peace, peace!*' he lets them fly, as he says, to teach their ignorant brethren."

"And now the general meets a tall, lusty man."

"I know him. He was a prime minister for years. Here he turns humming-tops and other nick-nacks for children."

"And who is this, now—?"

"Patience," said the Hermit, with a smile, as he rose from his seat, "you will know all the villagers

in good time—shall meet them all, and hear their stories, too, at our only inn, the 'Gratis.'"

With growing reverence for the Sage, we attended the Hermit of Bellyfulle back to his cell. "In half an hour," said he, graciously smiling, "it will be dinner time. Half an hour," he repeated with musical emphasis, as he passed into his chamber. Having profitably employed the time with cold water, we then, refreshed yet hungry, sought our host. The Hermit awaited us. He had put aside his cloak of the morning, and was again wrapped in his old damask gown. He perceived that we observed the change. "My custom, sir," he said; "I never yet could dine in full dress. The digestive organs, sir, abominate close buttoning; and do their work sulkily, grumblingly. No, sir; a man in full dress may chew and swallow, but he never dines. The stomach cannot honestly perform its functions in state." We smiled: whereupon the Hermit with a grave, sly look, asked—"Will you answer me this question?" We bowed. "Do you think it in the power of mortal man to give a fair, wise, learned judgment upon any dish or sauce soever, the said man being, at the time of tasting, in tight boots? Sir, it is impossible. The judicial organ is too delicate, too exquisitely nerved, to vindicate its sweet prerogative, unless the whole man, morally and bodily, be in a state of deep repose. And, therefore, can there be a greater wrong committed upon the cook, than the common injury of dining to music? It is abominable. Once—I well remember it—I chewed to the clangor, and crash, and thunder of a military band. Well, sir, the dinner was excellent—admirable as a dinner; but I have no more judgment than a beast, if I had any other taste in my mouth save the brass of the trumpets, and the tough parchment of the drum-heads. Silence, profound and solemn, is due to the first hour of dining. One minute before that time the finest jest is but a presumptuous impertinence. In my encyclopædia of the kitchen I have treated

of these things—philosophically and at large. For the present" ——

Here the Hermit upraised his forefinger, and at the same time the door was opened, and a man, drest in snowy white, followed by Bezoar, brought in the first dish. Placing it upon the table, the man disappeared, Bezoar taking his place behind the Hermit's chair. And then the Hermit rose, and baring his head, said grace. "Thanks be rendered for this: and may no man dine worse!" With this short ceremony the Hermit entered upon his serious task. He dined as though he was fulfilling a devout exercise of his life. Not a word escaped him, as dish after dish was levied upon, then taken away. We confess our ignorance of the many delicious things set before the Hermit, they had been so disguised, so elevated by the art of the cook. As, in silence, we watched the doings of the Sage—for soon we sat with idle knife and fork, whilst still our host cut away—we marvelled that a man so capable of solemn thoughts—a man who could discourse, as he had done, upon a churchyard—and the pride, the guilt, the empty foolishness of life—should be so curious, so eager in his food. With his strange quickness of mind, he jumped at our thoughts, and said—"I doubt not I can guess your meditation. I, myself, with the wings of my soul, have tried to escape from this mound of flesh," and he glanced at his stomach; "but the soul is, at best, as a trained hawk; let it fly as high as it will, there is its master for the time, with his feet upon the earth; and straightway it drops from the clouds at his call." Saying this, the Hermit pushed away his final plate. He had dined—for he had spoken.

"This wine is miraculous," said we, filling a glass of tokay.

"Yes; I shall remain some time in Hungary," answered the Hermit, sipping the liquor with educated lips. "This," said the Sage, holding the wine between him and the light, "this is the true blood of our dear mother

earth. I have often wondered at the sneaking ingratitude of astronomical men. In the name of grapes, why should not Bacchus have a star to himself? We have only to reflect upon the characters of the Pagan deities siderally honoured, to feel the indignity done to Bacchus. There is Saturn, a tyrant and a child-eater, —he must be set in a ring, and nominally hung in the sky. Mars, a bully, and nine times out of ten no whit better than a highwayman or burglar,—he, too, must twinkle insultingly upon men, made fools and rogues, tyrants and victims, by his abominable influence; yes, he, the recruiting sergeant of the heavens—must stare with his red face upon us;—and Mercury, thief and orator to boot, may wink through the long night, all having their admirers and worshippers; whilst for Bacchus, he, with all his great bounty, is starless and unhonoured. 'Twould be a pleasant, yea a proper thing," said the Hermit with a laugh, "to find a fire-new planet for him."

"Indeed," we answered, "in these days, it is not likely that Bacchus will meet with so bountiful an astronomer. In the outside world—to use your own words of Clovernook—his godship is in sad disgrace. His bottles are broken; his pottle-pots shivered; his name anathematized. Boys and girls, scarcely forgetful of the taste of mother's milk, renounce him and his ways; and more, by the potent eloquence of childhood, compel father and mother to forswear the worship of the frantic god. Drunkenness itself has lost its blotched and scarlet face, and, like the hart, pants only for pure water."

"Can it be?" asked the Hermit. "I never knew a drunkard so reformed, unless, indeed, he had been to the Land of Turveytop."

"The Land of Turveytop!" we cried: "where may that be? what people inhabit it, and what wonders may be done there?"

"As for its latitude," said the Hermit, "why, I will not puzzle your geography with it. The people are of

gigantic stature, at least forty feet high ; yet mild and benevolent—the nurses and pastors of the ordinary race of mortals."

"And is the land far distant?" we asked.

"Some hundred leagues, no more, from Clovernook. I was brought up there : understand me—brought up, after the fashion of the Turveytopians. The truth is, when I had arrived at man's estate, I found myself in possession of a bit of nearly every vice that blackens the sons of Adam. I will not run over the list, but to save your time and my breath will merely desire you to think me at that time knowing in all the rascally accomplishments generally shared among a crowd of sinners. And yet, though wild and lawless, and hotly pursuing all sorts of mad delights, I never felt a touch of happiness. My pleasure was at best delirium that left me spent and heavy-hearted. It was in one of those moods, when the whole world about me was, to my moral vision, coloured like so much brown paper, that walking at the base of a high mountain, it suddenly opened before me. Sir," said the Hermit, with a grave look that rebuked our gaze of incredulity, "I say the mountain opened. A narrow passage, adown which the sun shone with intense brightness, and whence I heard delicious sounds, as of distant music, was before me. Without a thought I entered it ; when having run a few paces, I turned round, and—the marrow froze in my bones—I saw the mountain had closed again behind me. I was trapped ; swallowed ; a miserable lump of breathing mortality, in the bowels of the earth. Great was the anguish of my heart ; yet, strangely enough, light, like sunlight, streamed down the long passage before me, and the sounds of the music became louder and louder. By degrees they carried peace and fortitude into my soul, and I began to walk rapidly forward. As I walked, the passage became wider, and at length ended in an open country ; where, save that the grass, the flowers, the trees, and all things about me, were of gigantic proportions, all in

form were the same as the things of the world I had left. I walked until I saw, what at first appeared to me, huge rocks. Continuing to approach them, I discovered them to be houses. My heart dropped within me, for I feared that I was in a land of giants. As the thought fell upon me, I turned round and almost swooned to the earth with fear. A giantess of nine-and-thirty feet three inches high—as I afterwards discovered—stood before me. Instantly I believed I was destined to be eaten alive. Though constitutionally gallant towards the sex, I was yet so wayward, that I would rather have fallen into the jaws of a tigress or any other female beast, than have formed the meal of the giantess before me. She saw my terror, and a smile broke upon her broad, good-humoured face, like a sunbeam on a rose-garden. A few strides brought her to me. I fell upon my knees, and lifted up my hands imploringly to her. Never did man drop at the foot of woman in more earnestness of soul. Never could he pray more fervently to be taken in marriage, than did I supplicate not to be chewed alive. The giantess, with a laugh that almost stunned me, bent over me; chucked me under the chin; playfully nipped the end of my nose; indented the tip of her fore-finger in both my cheeks, and shrilly crying *klukklukkluk*,—which answers to our homely *catchy, catchy*—took me in her arms like a raw, red-faced, hour-old baby."

"A strange place this Turveytop, and a strange people," cried we. "And amongst these folks you say you were brought up? Brought up! Why, you were of man's estate when the mountain opened and received you."

"True; but it is the benevolence of the Turveytopians to take in men and women to nurse: to bring them up anew; and to this philanthropic end, every new comer is treated as a new-born babe. Bless you! I have seen a philosopher, who had made a great noise among his brother pigmies on the outside of the mountain, I

have seen him sent back to nurse's milk and pap. The one great principle of the Turveytopians is this, to take no knowledge for granted on the part of those they nurse. May this tokay, sir,"—cried the Hermit, about to quaff—"may it turn to train oil in my gullet, if I have not seen a Chancellor made, whether or no, to suck his thumb, because the little varlet would affect precocity and quarrel with his nurse, as if to suck his thumb was an act below his consequence. I have seen, too, a Lord Chamberlain taught again to walk: yes, seen him toddling after a sugar-stick held temptingly, encouragingly, 'twixt his nurse's fingers."

"And for what purpose," we asked, "this teaching over again? Was it not a waste of time and pains?"

"Assuredly not," answered the Hermit gravely: and then fixing his eye upon us, he asked, "Have you not known folks in the outside world, who—standing it may be within a few years of their grave—seemed, nevertheless, as if they had learned all their worldly knowledge the wrong way? As if, to be aught good, wise, and morally dignified, they should learn the lesson of life again; yea, beginning in the nursery, should sprawl and roar in the nurse's lap? You cannot think this? It matters not: the honest Turveytopians have this belief, and therefore take weak and wicked men and women, of every age, as younglings from the womb; they are called the babes of the mountain—children of earth; and for the many vices and faults which they bring with them into Turveytop, why, they are considered as spots and flaws inseparable from their former condition. "Oh! the men I have seen there," cried the Hermit, with a laugh—"the kings, lords, bishops, lawmakers I have seen, all put into second swaddling-clothes, and brought up again as gentle, wise, charitable, sagacious folk, doing good credit to the beautiful earth, which, in their former days, they so grievously scandalized."

"But surely," said we, "it was to take the training a

little too far back. We cannot, we repeat, but think it loss of time and trouble."

"Certainly not," cried the Hermit. "Consider, sir, how delightful it must be, by a strong effort of the soul, to lose and forget all that we have mislearned of life, and so begin the lesson again—with clear heads and ruddy hearts. To compass this with the reprobates of the world is the purpose of the Turveytopians—wise, gracious, wonderful giants that they are—mighty only in their goodness, superhuman in their sweet charities."

"Pray," we cried, "tell us your history whilst in Turveytop."

"You shall hear it, sir," said the Hermit, "and the brief histories of many others."

We drew close to the table, and waited the story with impatience.

"Though trembling violently in the arms of the giantess, I became gradually self-assured by the sweet good-humour of my nurse. She gazed and nodded smilingly at me, like a girl with a new doll; and although I felt distressed and humiliated, I nevertheless smiled—though I fear a wan, sickly smile—in acknowledgment of her tenderness. Then she threw me up in the air, and caught me again in her arms. Never before had I been so far from earth. My head swam, and my stomach—I had that day dined off eel-pie and goose—threatened treachery, when I heard a loud voice exclaim in the very purest English,—for the Turveytopians know all the languages of the earth,—'Slut! baggage! Is that the way to toss and jolt a new-born babe?' Holding me in her arms, my nurse turned round, and I beheld in the speaker a matronly giantess, with a kind, motherly countenance. 'A pretty skittish thing you are to trust babies to,' she cried. 'Poor poppet,'—and the benevolent gentlewoman wiped my nose,—'it doesn't look half an hour old; and yet here you are, throwing it up and churning its little bowels like butter.' 'La, grandmother!' cried the girl, 'it doesn't mind it. See,

if it doesn't laugh!' I certainly did grin. 'Laugh!' said the old dame; 'you know-nothing hoyden! laugh! Poor little heart, it's wind.' At this, I couldn't help it, I chuckled vigorously. 'There! if the dear lamb isn't choking,' cried the woman; 'away with it to the nursery, or you 'll have its precious life upon your soul.' Instantly the girl hugged me to her bosom, cast her apron over me, and ran—I thought she flew—with all her legs. I saw nothing until the girl carried me into a spacious, lofty room, which in a moment I knew must be the nursery. There were about twenty other infants, from a day to a week old; infants I must call them, though all of them were older than myself. Some were screaming, shouting, swearing in the most shocking manner that they were not babies, that they were men —wise, learned, authoritative men—and would shake the pillars of the heavens ere they would be treated as sucklings."

"And what said the nurses?" we asked.

"Oh, sir! what nurses usually say at such a time. They bawled and shouted too. Then they called the babies 'precious ducks,' 'darlings,' 'apples of their eyes,' 'plagues,' and then 'precious ducks' again. There was an old dowager from the outside world—how she had ever wandered into Turvcytop I know not—who, screaming like a catcall, begged to ask the wretches if they knew what they were about. Declared that she had a son lord chief justice, and then desired to know if she was to be treated like a child."

"And what was the answer?" we inquired.

"None, sir," said the Hermit—"none, save that the woman who was swathing and dressing her, shrilly sang a nursery song, and tossed her about like so much pie-crust. From this, I found that no big words, no struggling of mine, would prevail, and therefore meekly resigned myself. And, sir, I had my reward; for having been properly powdered and swaddled, my nurse declared that I was the quietest dove of a babe she had ever handled: quite a lamb."

"And, pray forgive the question, did they really give you to a wet nurse?"

"They did, sir," answered the Hermit smiling, "and a very comfortable woman she was. It was wonderful how soon I accommodated myself to a milk diet. In a short time I seemed to have sucked in a serenity of soul. Recovered somewhat from the amazement of the day, I took counsel with myself in bed."

"Delicious, peace-giving bed!" we cried.

The Hermit looked grave. "Happy is the man," he answered, "who can say peace-giving bed. For oh, sir! what a rack to the spirit of man may be found in goose-down! You do not seem to apprehend me? Consider, sir, what an unavoidable self-confessional is bed. Think, sir, what it is to have our conscience put to the question of goose-feathers. You are in bed, peace-giving bed, you say—it is deep night; and in that solemn pause, you seem to feel the pulse—to hear the very heart of time. You try to think of many things, but the spirit or demon of the bed sets up yourself before yourself—brings all your doings to the bar of your own conscience; and what a set of scurvy gaol-birds may be among them! They peep in at your curtains, crowd at the foot of your bed, and though you burn no rushlight, you see their leering, sneaking faces. Alas! you cannot disown them: you know that some time or other you have given them house-room in your soul, and, like unclean things, they have repaid the hospitality with defilement. There they are, old co-mates, sworn acquaintances; and yet the world could not believe that, for a moment, you kept such company. Oh, no! abroad in the world you have all sorts of graces accounted to you. Alack! that night-cap and sheets should, to your own conscience, make you bankrupt. They make you know yourself hypocrite; stand before you, even though you lie in darkness, your polished, easy, cordial, out-door self—a man without a subterfuge, a soul without a meanness. And your head upon your pillow—if conscious blood beat

at your heart—you blush for the counterfeit you have a thousand times put off upon the world, and shudder at the accusing naughtinesses about you. Peace-giving bed! It may be so; and it may be—oh, sir!" cried the sage of Bellyfulle, "if all our faults, our little tricks, our petty cozenings, our bopeep moods with truth and justice, could be sent upon us in the blankets, all embodied, sir, in fleas, how many of us of lily skins would get up spotted scarlet?"

"But surely, sir," said we, "you had no time for such remorseful thoughts in the nursery?"

"No—not then," answered the Hermit. "Then, as I said, I took counsel with myself; and resolved, since the strangeness of my fate had cast me in Turveytop, to bear with meekness all that might befall me. The giant folk are wise, benevolent, I thought; else, wherefore should they seek to purge men of their wicked worldliness, taking them back to their first swaddling-hour, that they may learn the lesson of life anew? Yes; I will forget the scurvy wisdom that puffed my heart, and made me cock my cap, a knowing fellow. I will let the cunning, self-complacent, braggart creature die here where I am, and be taken up a baby—yea, a very suckling."

"This, sir," we said, "would be a rare secret to teach men."

"It was taught in Turveytop—truly taught; but I know not how it was, there was something in the place, the people, that after a time made the most stubborn of the babes apt and cunning pupils. For myself, I resolved upon docility; and lying where my nurse had placed me, I bade all my rascal thoughts depart; by a strong effort of the soul kicked from my brain many a shrewd deceit, that, in former days, I had treasured more than gold and jewels."

"And so became a babe again?"

"What a delicious pause was that! How sweet that cleanliness of soul! There I lay in thoughts of

lavender; for the babihood of Turveytop is not like our first childhood. There, man is not a midway thing, between two mysteries, the cradle and the coffin. No, sir; having purged my brain of its secreted wickedness, I was conscious of my sweet condition. I felt and rejoiced in my infancy of heart, and I have not forgotten its deliciousness. I was resolved to begin my life anew; and as a droll destiny had given me a nursling to the giants, I so played my part of babihood, that my nurse outsounded all her gossips with my praises. Thus, I never cried or whimpered, but suffered myself to be dressed and undressed, crowing the while, and walking up my nurse's knees—and cooing and laughing in her lap. In this, as I have said, I found my account: in a fortnight I was short-coated, and in another fortnight was put upon my feet, for my nurse declared that in a week I should be able to walk alone. Many of my companions were less docile. There was one—he had been an admiral—who roared and swore in a terrible vein, and vowed he would only be quieted with pig-tail tobacco. Another, a weazened babe—a money-lender in former life—was never silent but when he was allowed to wear his nurse's silver thimble on his head, he did so love the metal. Most of the children, however, lost by degrees the errors and weaknesses of their former days, and in time became span-new creatures."

"And pray, sir," we asked, "what term of probation did they pass, ere they were permitted to claim man's estate?"

"That depended upon the progress of the individual; for, with the Turveytopians the year of discretion was not fixed by the almanac, but by the wisdom and purity of the neophyte. There were, certainly, a few babies—I must still call them so—who had been in Turveytop for centuries. You are aware, sir, that it was the fashion with those sorry dogs the Romans, when any of their heroes were missing, to swear that they had been carried

off by Mars, charioted by a clap of thunder. A flam-sir—a political flam—to double-gild the memory of ruffi, ans. The truth is, they were taken to Turveytop, and there they still remain; they are such hopeless block-heads, they can learn nothing good and peaceable. There, they are vermin-hunters to the giants, waging war with the rats and mice; no child's sport, sir, when you consider the strength and immensity of the beasts. Poor King Arthur, whom the Welshmen look for—and King Sebastian, still expected by all believing Portuguese—both of them are in Turveytop, and there, I think, are likely to remain. Arthur, the mirror of knighthood, is a sulky, watery-headed lout, continually robbing the other children of their nuts and apples—throwing sticks at the legs of flies, and slily sticking pins into the youngest babies. The Welshmen believe in Arthur's return, faithfully as in leeks; but, sir, the Turvey-topians know that he would only spoil his reputation, so keep him where he is. And for the good King Sebas-tian, who, nearly three hundred years ago, passed into Africa, to cut Moorish throats, he was spirited off to Turveytop, to be taught decent dealing."

"And how has the teaching prospered?" we inquired.

"Very badly, sir," answered the Hermit. "I don't know how it is, but the heroes and wise folks of our world become sad lubbers and dunces among the giants. I have seen King Sebastian seated with twenty other kings and legislators, all of them famous upon our earth for their justice and wisdom; I have seen each of them, with a piece of chalk between his fingers, vainly trying to draw a straight line. For centuries have they in Turvey-top been set to do such simple task, before they should be permitted to return to their old world again; yet has no one of them accomplished it. No, sir; there is not one of them who does not draw zig-zag. And the best of it is, each of them swears that his own crookedness is the straightest of the straight. The Turveytop

geometrician shakes his head with a mild pity, whereupon the late kings and lawmakers sulk, and, in a low voice, swear at him. Fate alone can tell when poor Sebastian will get to Portugal again. A sad thing for him, sir," said the Hermit—"for I doubt not that there his worst zig-zag might pass for a perfect straight line. The dunces I have heard at school, too!"—and the Hermit sighed.

"Then they sent you all to school?" we observed.

"Assuredly," said the Hermit, "and to me sweet and pleasant was the academy. Not that we were packed off, to be nailed to a form, as soon as we could lisp;—the Turveytopians are wiser, more benevolent. No—we sprawled and kicked about in the sun, and rode cock-horse upon the backs of snails, and took flying leaps upon grasshoppers, and tore our frocks, and rolled in puddles, and dirtied our faces, and ran thorns into our fingers—and, in short, did every other trick that endears a child to its parents. Yes, our constitution was suffered to strengthen like palm-trees in the sun and air, and the alphabet was an unthought-of calamity, until we were at least seven years old. The girls were taken in hand at five; for women, sir, are somehow always in advance of us."

"Is that your faith?"

"Is it not indisputable? Though Eve was younger than Adam, was she not more than a match for him? As for girls," said the Hermit with a gentle chuckle, "I know not if it be not a great defect in their education that they should be taught to read and write at all."

"It cannot be, sir," we cried. "What! rear the tender, blooming souls in ignorance?"

"Why not?" said the Hermit, stroking his chin, whilst his eye twinkled. "Why not, sir? Ignorance is the mother of admiration. Perhaps they'd love us all the better for it. Ha, my friend! you know not what mischief may be done when you teach a girl to spell, and put a pen in her hand. It 's adding weapons of

offence where there was more than enough before. 'Tis like giving another quill to a porcupine. Relentless souls, how many of them *will* write! Man,—let him be praised, though praised in a whisper for it!—has his fits of lordly idleness, his accidental headache in the morning, and he turns from his standish as from a nauseous draught, and his grey goose feather rises upon his stomach as though it was the bird's yesterday's flesh; and so, taking his hat, he lounges abroad, hugging his laziness and dearly loving it: or he sits in his chair, the world unthought of, humming upon its axis, and he, in sweetest independence, twiddling his thumbs. Not so with woman, sir; she has no idleness, not she; that blot darkens not the crystal purity of her resolution. She, like frail bibulous man, has never one of *his* headaches! No, sir, the world gets no such respite. Fatally industrious, and sweetly temperate, your writing woman, like a cuttle-fish, secretes ink for every day."

"'Twill go ill with you," said we to the sage, "should woman write your epitaph."

"Nay, her gratitude will protect me," answered the Hermit, "seeing that I shall then let her have what is dearest to the sex."

"And what is that?" we asked.

"The last word,"—and the Hermit blandly smiled. "Nevertheless, sir, let what I have said rest between us. For the sex—blessings on their honied hearts!—will forgive wrong, outrage, perjury sworn ten times deep—anything against their quiet, but a jest. Break a woman's heart, and she'll fit the pieces together, and, with a smile, assure the penitent that no mischief is done—indeed, and indeed, she was never better. Break a joke, light as water-bubble, upon her constancy, her magnanimity—nay, upon her cookery—and take good heed; she declares war—war to the scissors. There was my great aunt Dorcas. Poor soul! Her husband had tried the woman a hundred cruel ways, and found her, as her own mother declared, quite an angel. Her

heart had been broken many, many years ; and yet so well do women repair the ravages of time and accident, nobody would ever have thought it. Well, sir, this woman, who had endured wrong, neglect—nay, some did whisper, the slight of infidelity, to boot—this woman, who, placidly as a saint in china, had smiled upon a husband's villainies, at length parted from the man upon a custard! Yes, sir: her tyrant of a mate—as he thought, poor wretch! pleasantly enough—flung a heavy joke, before company, too, upon his wife's pastry. The man had never been known to attempt a jest till then. Whereupon, aunt Dorcas said she had endured enough ; there was a limit even to a wife's forbearance. She rose from the table, and died upon a separate maintenance."

"Pray, sir," we inquired, "has your philosophy fathomed the cause of all this?"

"'Tis in the deeper gravity of the sex," said the Hermit. "Nay, sir, I mean it. They are shallow thinkers, sir, who declare women to be light and frivolous. Depend upon it, they take life much more in earnest than we do. Hence, sir, woman is rarely a joke-making animal. Far better than we does she know the perishable materials of which life is made, and takes serious care of them accordingly. And then, sir, the delicacy of the sex makes them shrink from a jest. Like pistol or small sword, it is a masculine weapon, and not to be intruded upon their gentle presence. No, sir ; a woman may be brought to forgive bigamy, but not a joke."

"It may be so," said we ; "but, sir, all this time we have wandered from Turveytop. You were sent to school there, you say?"

"I was—and there, indeed, the time went gaily by. Benevolent and gentle was the schoolmaster, and worthy of the honours lavished by the state upon him. Ay, sir, you may look ; but in Turveytop the schoolmaster is not a half-drudge, half-executioner. No, sir; the im-

portance, the solemnity, of his mission is conceded. Children are not sent to him with no more ceremony than if they were terrier-pups, packed to the farrier to have their tails docked and their ears rounded. In Turvcytop, the schoolmaster is considered the maker of the future people — the moral artificer of society. Hence, the state pays him peculiar consideration. It is allowed that his daily labours are in the immortal chambers of the mind—the mind of childhood, new from the Maker's hand, and undefiled by the earth. Hence, there is a solemnity, almost a sacredness, in the schoolmaster's function; upon him and his high and tender doings does the state of Turvcytop depend, that its prisons shall be few. It is for him to wage a daily war with the gaoler. His work is truly glorious, for it is with childhood—beautiful childhood!" cried the Hermit passionately—"holy childhood, with still the bloom of its first home upon it! For, indeed, there is a sanctity about it—it is a bright new-comer from the world unknown, a creature with unfolded soul! And yet, sir, are there not states where, whilst yet the creature draws its pauper milk—of the same sort, by the way, that nurtured Abel—we give it to those fiends of earth, violence and wrong, and then scourge, imprison, hang the pupil for the teaching of its masters? Childhood, with its innocence killed in the very seed? Childhood, a fetid imp in rags, with fox-like, thievish eyes and lying breath, the foul weed of a city? Such, indeed, it is to the niceness of our senses, shrinking at the filth and whining of that world-wrinkled babe. But look at it aright, sir,"—cried the Hermit with new animation — "translate its mutterings into their true meaning. What do you see?—what hear? The lineaments and cryings of an accusing demon; a giant thing of woe and mischiefs scowling and shrieking at the world that hath destroyed its holiness of life; that, seizing it, yea from the hand of its Maker, hath defaced the divinity of its impress, and made it devil—a devil to

do a devil's mischief; then to be doomed and punished by a self-complacent world, that lays the demon in a felon's grave, and after, sighs and wrings the hands at human wickedness."

"In the strange land you speak of," we observed, wishing to divert the passion of the Hermit, for, indeed, he seemed strangely possessed,—"you said that childhood had its sacred claims allowed. There, all were taught—all tended. The schoolmaster, too, had high privileges?"

"The highest," cried the sage, his light good-humour returning. "Indeed, in Turveytop the schoolmasters may be said to take the place of our commanding soldiers. We give rank, distinction, high praises to generals and such folk for the cunning slaughter of their thousands. We take the foul smell out of bloodshed, and call men-quellers heroes. We give them gold lace, and stick feathers upon them, and hang them about with Orders of Saint Fire, Saint Pillage, and Saint Slaughter. We strip the skin from the innocent sheep to make rub-a-dub to their greatness, and blow their glory to the world from blatant brass. Now, the Turveytopians have no soldiers; but they give the same amount of honour to their schoolmasters. They have a belief that it is quite as noble to build up a mind as to hack a body; that to teach meekness, content, is as high a feat as to cut a man through the shoulder bone; that, in a word, it is as wise and useful, and surely as seemly in the eye of watchful Heaven, to fill the human brain with thoughts of goodness, as to scatter it from a skull, cleft by the sword in twain. Hence, the schoolmaster in Turveytop is a great social authority, honoured by the state. The savage counts his glories by scalps; the refined man of war by his gazettes. The general kills five thousand men — defeats some twenty thousand. He may have picked a quarrel with them, that he might pick his sprig of laurel, and rejoice in lawful plunder. He has done his work upon humanity; he has

acted his part in the world—a world of human sympathies —and he becomes earl, or steps up duke. It is his rightful wage, paid by a grateful hand. The schoolmaster of Turveytop numbers his scholars; shows the heroes he has made; the victors over self among his army; the troops of wise and peaceful citizens he has marshalled for the field of life, and is honoured and rewarded accordingly."

"And you were sent to one of these great pedagogues —these laurelled teachers?"

"Excellent old man!" cried the Hermit. "He was sorely tried by some of us. The perverseness, the stupidity of some of my school-fellows passes belief; yet the master's sweetness of spirit was unconquerable. Some of his pupils he never could teach to spell the commonest syllables. There was one boy—in our world he would have passed for about sixty-five—who never could master the word *good*. For years, as I understood, he had been haggling at it. 'Now, my poor little boy,' I have heard the schoolmaster cry a hundred and a hundred times, a melancholy smile upon his reverend face, 'now, my child, spell me *good*.' Whereupon the pupil—a thin-faced, greenish-eyed fellow, and, as I learned, a former dealer in foreign stocks—would answer '*g-o-l-d*.' And thus it had been with him for years; and thus, if alive, it may be with him now. Wretched little dunce! He could not comprehend any other way of spelling *good* than *g-o-l-d*. He, however, was not alone in his dulness. No; there were twenty other scholars from the outside world who still stumbled at the syllable. Will it be believed?—There was one boy, about fifty-two, with a drum-like belly and a somewhat purplish nose. It was whispered that, ere he was brought to Turveytop, he had been a vicar, more than apostolically sharp for his tithes. Well, sir, you would have expected higher intelligence from such a scholar; yet somehow he never could master the monosyllable. '*Good*' would be the word of the teacher, and still the

fat-bellied boy would spell '*p-i-g.*' How our dear schoolmaster would look perplexed! How plainly I could see him striving to account for the confusion in the pupil's mind, that still from year to year had gone on spelling '*g o o d*' with the letters '*p-i-g.*' The simple monosyllable was a trying task for many of the scholars. Indeed, how few of them — from the defect of their previous worldly education—could spell the word the proper way! The old admiral I have already spoken of, always insisted upon spelling it—'*g-r-o-g.*' From my heart, I pitied the schoolmaster; for whilst other teachers were seeing the young Turveytopians advance in all their daily lessons, and so, doing their master honour in the land, our poor pedagogue was doomed to sit almost hopelessly amid a crowd of dunces, whose dull or debauched faculties rendered them incapable of the easiest tasks. And yet no word of passion or reproach ever escaped the teacher. 'Poor little boy,' he would say, with a sigh, having hammered for an hour and more at the word '*g o o d,*' while some foxhunting urchin, with his hands in his pockets, and a brassy confidence in his face, would spell '*d o g*;'—'poor little boy,' the giant schoolmaster would exclaim, 'it is not your fault, poor heart! no, it is the dark, dreadful world you have come from!' It is a sad thing to think of," said the Hermit, "yet are there many, many pupils, growing hoary, and still mis-spelling '*good,*' nay, dying, and still unable to master that easy monosyllable. For I know not how many hundred years King Arthur there, in the preparatory school of Turveytop, has been sulking with his thumb in his mouth, still spelling '*b-l-o-o-d*' for '*g o o d.*' The last time I saw him he had on a dunce's paper cap, made out of a poem written in this world to his especial honour."

"And King Arthur, and King Sebastian, too,—you have talked with them in Turveytop?" we cried.

"Most certainly," said the Hermit.

"And Numa Pompilius?"—

"And Joanna Southcote," said the sage.

"Is it possible?" we exclaimed. "Joanna Southcote! Then she is not dead? That is, she will keep her word, and come back to us?"

"And open a baby linen warehouse," said the Hermit. "She told me as much, for the comfort of her believers; though, to confess the truth, I have never until now bragged of my acquaintance with her. As, however, she has been given up as incurable by the Turveytopians, there is but little chance of her returning to this world, since they suffer no one to come back who does not at least promise continued amendment. Now, Joanna, as I have said, is incurable."

"And what her malady?" we asked.

"Lying, sir," answered the sage. "And her great grief is, that nobody in Turveytop will believe her. Poor thing! How she laments her loss of this world! She dwelt alone in a little cottage, and being famous for her tea-cakes—for there is a sort of sanctity that hath a quick sense of kitchen comforts—was much visited by King Arthur, Sebastian, and other dunces of Turveytop. I deny it not; I have made one at these meetings. She was a sleek-looking, cosey woman, with a voice like a flute. On my first visit to her,—for there was something about her that somewhat tickled me,"——

"Her tea-cakes?" we ventured in the smallest voice to observe.

"Well, sir," said the Hermit, with a smile, "when there be not other virtues, let even tea-cakes pass for something. On my first visit, she would have devoured me for news. 'Anything stirring in my way in London?' she asked. I answered, 'No, madam; nothing whatever. I left all the people very dull—not at all what they were when you were among them.'—'Well, I did give them a rouse,' she said; and then mournfully added, 'but I suppose they have forgotten me?'—'Why, the truth is, madam, ingratitude is the public's sin; nevertheless, you are still spoken of, and by a

hopeful few are promised back again. The worst of it is, should you really return, I fear there will be unbelievers who, even to your face, will disown you.'—'Never mind that,' said Joanna; 'only let me get back again, and I warrant me I 'll have the world by the nose once more. As for being disowned, why, for the matter of that, I 'd take another name, and start a new mystery. Is there, at the present time, think you, room for such a novelty?'—'As I have said, madam, we have been somewhat dull in such matters of late. There has been no new prophet on the stage for some time.'—'Then the world wants one. Don't tell me, I know it: bless you, after a season, the world gets sick and tired of its old, old truths,—and longing, hungering for a good lie, will swallow anything. Otherwise, do you think I should have gone down as I did? though even I made one great mistake—my lie was not quite strong enough.'—'Pretty well, I think, madam.'—'Not at all,' said Joanna; 'and then I gave it too short a date. Nevertheless, I *did* hook 'em,—folks of all degrees,—a good sprinkling of the high with the low—gentle and simple—rich and poor. Well, if there is any sport worthy of human enjoyment, it is cheating our fellow-creatures.'"

"The old harridan!" we cried.

"Still give her the praise of an ingenuous tongue," said the Hermit. "Joanna only confessed what I fear me, many believe and practise, yet vehemently deny. The woman spoke in earnest, and that's something. And I fear me, she spoke truly of the world's hunger at intervals for imposition. It is, I suppose, with the multitude as sometimes with single Nokes or Styles: truth becomes to them monotonous—propriety dulness; and so they get a zest for a lie, and make holiday with extravagance. Nay, sir, if we look philosophically into the matter, the greater the outrage offered to their minds, the deeper, by consequence, their faith in it. A zany boasts his daily intercourse with angelic spirits:

the daring of the falsehood carries away the imagination of weak and simple folks who clap hands with the impostor, that they may be nearer to his celestial intelligences. The spiritual mountebank, juggling with human hopes and fears, offers a closer knowledge of the mystery of mysteries. Hence, the dupe is often born of the zealot. Enough of this. Perhaps, some day Joanna will be again in the world: though, as she says, under another name, and preaching forth another marvel. It has been thus almost since Truth was born—and she came smiling from chaos upon the earth—and will be thus until the end."

"And the Turveytopians? What of their government—their laws, and customs?"

"Of such matters know I nothing," said the Hermit, "save that the schoolmasters were, so to speak, the nobility of the people. We scholars, spirited from the outside world to be brought up and taught in all things anew, were confined to the nursery, the school-room and play-grounds. Indeed, save that the benevolence of our masters was more remarkable than in the teachers of dancing-dogs, they seemed to look upon us as inferior creatures, that might, with time and pains, be taught some tricks of humanity—that possibly, by a sojourn in Turveytop, might be made less mischievous to one another when sent back to the world we were taken from. Hence, I saw but little of the political and social condition of Turveytop. There ran a legend that, many hundred years ago, there arose a civil war in the land, which was ended in a way it would be pleasant to see imitated."

"How, sir?" we asked.

"Why, the two parties had armed themselves with swords and spears and battle-axes—things unknown till then—and guns and cannon, and all the devilry which laurels come of. Thus armed, the divided people took the field. The opposing chiefs had marked their ground, and every man rubbed his hands—for the Turveytopians

were, for the time, frantic with malice—at the sweet thought of chopping his neighbour through the skull, whilst those birds of glory, the vultures, were already cock-a-whoop for human flesh. Now, at that time the Turveytopians worshipped, among other divinities, a certain God of Laughter. I know not that such was his name; but mirth, loud, reckless, rollicking mirth, was his high attribute. This god had of late been much neglected. The Turveytopians—having their hearts filled with rancour, and in the drunkenness of their wrath yearning for nought but blood and wounds—had wickedly neglected the service of their beneficent *Numen*. Oh, glorious laughter!" cried the Sage of Bellyfulle, falling back in his chair, and turning his broad shining face upwards, whilst his eyes twinkled benignly, and his lips seemed trembling with a jest—"thou man-loving spirit, that for a time dost take the burden from the weary back—that dost lay salve to the feet, bruised and cut by flints and shards—that takest blood-baking melancholy by the nose, and makest it grin despite itself—that all the sorrows of the past, the doubts of the future, confoundest in the joy of the present—that makest man truly philosophic — conqueror of himself and care! What was talked of as the golden chain of Jove, was nothing but a succession of laughs, a chromatic scale of merriment, reaching from earth to Olympus. It is not true that Prometheus stole the fire, but the laughter of the gods, to deify our clay, and in the abundance of our merriment, to make us reasonable creatures. Have you ever considered, sir, what man would be, destitute of the ennobling faculty of laughter? Why, sir, laughter is to the face of man—what sinovia, I think anatomists call it, is to his joints,—it oils, and lubricates, and makes the human countenance divine. Without it, our faces would have been rigid, hyæna-like; the iniquities of our heart, with no sweet antidote to work upon them, would have made the face of the best among us a horrid, husky thing, with two sullen, hungry, cruel

lights at the top—for foreheads would have then gone out of fashion—and a cavernous hole below the nose. Think of a babe without laughter; as it is, its first intelligence! The creature shows the divinity of its origin and end, by smiling upon us: yes, smiles are its first talk with the world, smiles the first answers that it understands. And then, as worldly wisdom comes upon the little thing, it crows, it chuckles, it grins, and shaking in its nurse's arms, or in waggish humour playing bo-peep with the breast, it reveals its high destiny—declares, to him with ears to hear it, the heirdom of its immortality. Let materialists blaspheme as gingerly and as acutely as they will, they must find confusion in laughter. Man may take a triumphant stand upon his broad grins; for he looks around the world, and his innermost soul, sweetly tickled with the knowledge, tells him that he alone of all creatures laughs. Imagine, if you can, a laughing fish. Let man then send a loud ha! ha! through the universe, and be reverently grateful for the privilege."

"And the Turveytopians, you say, sir, had their God of Laughter?"

"And, from what I could gather, he held a most exalted place in their Pantheon. Sweet, too, especially sweet, was one of their customs of sacrifice. It was this. A man always dedicated his first joke, whatever it might be, to the God of Laughter. There was a fine spirit of gratitude in the practice, a sweet acknowledgment of the honied uses of mirth in this our daily draught of life, otherwise cold, flatulent, and bitter. This first offering was always a matter of great solemnity. The maker of the joke, whether man or maid, was taken in pompous procession to the shrine of the god. And there, the joke—beautifully worked in letters of gold upon some rich-coloured silk or velvet—was given in to the *flamen*, who read it to the assembled people, who roared approving laughter. The joker was then taken back in triumph to his house, and feasting and sports for nine days marked this his first

act of citizenship; for I should tell you that no jokeless man could claim any civil rights. Hence, when the man began to joke, he was considered fit for the gravest offices of human government; and not till then."

"What! no civil rights? Had he no vote—if indeed there were votes in Turveytop—for his representative in the Senate?—for"—

"Sir," replied the Hermit, gravely, "he had no voice in anything; not even in the making of a beadle. The man without a joke in Turveytop was a wretch, an outcast; indeed, to give you the strongest, the truest comparison, he was what your man in England is, without a guinea."

"Miserable wretch!" we cried. "And what became of these creatures?"

"As I learned, the jokeless did all the foul and menial work. Miserable men, indeed! I have heard of a country in which the social dignity and moral intelligence of the man was computed by the soap he was wont to outlay upon his anatomy. He might be too poor to buy the soap; never mind that; it was a terrible thing, and stung the penniless offender like a nettle, to call him 'the unwashed!' Now, in Turveytop, it amounted to the same degree of ignominy to call a man the jokeless! Some of these might be in tatters and starving; well, they would ask charity, and how? They would say nothing of rags and hunger, but stopping the rich, they would despairingly slap the forehead, and in a hollow voice, cry 'No joke!' Thus, in those days of Turveytop, jokes gave dignity to the highest offices of the state. Senators and magistrates thought of nothing but making a joke of their functions and reputation. They had their great reward not only in the admiration of the people, but in the high degree of mental expression and physical beauty which their genius, constantly exercised, inevitably awarded them."

"Have jokes such benign power upon their makers?" we asked.

"Unquestionably," answered the Hermit, startled at the question. "Take a sulky fellow, with a brow ever wrinkled at the laughing hours, let them laugh ever so melodiously—who looks with a death's head at the pleasant fruits of the earth heaped upon his table—who leaves his house for business as an ogre leaves his cave for food—who returns home joyless and grim to his silent wife and creeping children,—take such a man, and, if possible, teach him to joke. Why, sir, 'twould be like turning a mandril into an Apollo. A hearty jest kills an ugly face. The divine nature of man irradiates and ennobles what at first sight seems wholly animal. What a mighty joker was Socrates! Yes, joker, sir; and rightly have the sculptors imagined that knotty countenance, sublimed and sweetened by the laughing spirit within! Now, the jokeless of Turveytop—as it was related to me—became physically forlorn; the sympathy of mind and flesh was so active. Hence, they were drudges, scavengers, bone-grubbers, pickers-up of old rags and iron, bearers of burdens, outcasts, miserable creatures;—the jokers all the while sitting high in place, their cheeks greasy with the marrow of the earth, their eyes twinkling with its nectar."

"Strange, indeed!" we cried.

"Ay, sir," said the Hermit, "for there are places in which, nine times out of ten, your joker is the lean drudge, and the dull fellow has the pot-belly, the purple nose, and the full purse."

"And now, sir, for the civil war in Turveytop? You say it was pleasantly ended?"

"In this fashion," said the Hermit, "if I have heard the legend truly. The two armies, in high conceit with their murderous weapons—for until that time there had been no men-killing engines known in Turveytop—lusted for the fight. Now, sir, you have heard or read of the vast concern shown by the gods of the heathen in the battles of their favourite soldiers—as if, for instance, you and I should have pet emmets in the

bloody struggle for an ear of barley. Indeed, whether or no, man *will* make his gods shoulder the knapsack with him: he will make them enter the breach, fire the town, clap a ready hand upon movables; knock a wayward householder on the head, and after, take enjoyment in the cellar, the larder, and the chamber. Man will, as I say, take his gods campaigning with him; and, sir, it must be owned, scurvy treatment they oftimes meet with at his hands. When he has laboured profitably in the bloody harvest, he gives them money for their good-will and support; and, alas, poor gods! with swaggering, blaspheming impudence, thanks them for his good fortune in robbery and slaughter. To hear of certain thanksgivings for successful battle, should we not believe that the devil had made *his* Adam, and that the slaughtered creatures were children of the demon handiwork, begotten by the evil principle, to be zealously attacked and butchered by the progeny of him who walked and talked with God in Paradise? It would seem thus; but it is not so. No, we are children of one Father, and when we have killed some thousand brethren or so, why, with unwashed hands and demure faces, we thank God for his good help in the fratricide. In the outside world of brazen brows, there is no impudence like the impudence of what men call religion."

"Still, sir," we urged, "you wander from the battle of Turveytop."

"Right: to wander is a besetting sin of mine. Keep we now to the story. Well, sir, the two armies were about to fight, when the God of Joking—whose shrine had been sadly despised and neglected in preparation for the war—resolved to put an end to the wickedness, and so to bring the Turveytopians back again to jests and reason. Whereupon, as the story runs, the God Jocus repaired to a high hill near the battle-field, and seating himself cross-legged on its summit, called his thousands of servants about him, giving them due orders

for their goodly work. The god surveyed the hosts below him with a wan smile, and then clapping his hands to his sides, he laughed a laugh of thunder. On this, the trumpets brayed once, and once only, and the armies engaged. In a moment the god saw that his sprites—there were immortal thousands, though born of human brains—had done his wise behest. There was no smoke—no fire. The great guns were dumb—the muskets undischarged; for be it known to you, sir, that the Turveytopians had at the time all the weapons since invented in our miniature world. Then you might have seen the soldiers charge, and their brittle bayonets break harmless against the bellies of the foes: then would some seize their weapons, and with the butt-end strike the enemy in the teeth. And the enemy stood and licked their lips. Wherefore, you will ask? I will tell you. The musket-stock was no longer walnut-wood; but, by the benignity of the great God Jocus, a thing of savoury sausage-meat, calling up the spirit of enjoyment in the heart of man, as it smote his nostril. In this way, sir, all things were changed. Here you would see a soldier take a cartridge from his box, and with bloody and sepulchral looks bite the cartridge-end. At that moment the face changed to sweetness and content; for, the cartridge bitten, a delicious cordial flowed into the mouth of the biter, and winding about his stony heart, melted it into human jelly. Here you would see a grenadier sucking a bayonet, as a nursling sucks a lollipop; and wherefore?—The great God Jocus had turned the deadly weapon into sugar-candy. In another place you might behold the small drums turned into pots of jelly, and the little drummer-boys eating therefrom, and painting their downy faces with raspberry and currant of more than martial red. Big drums took the shape and flavour of rounds of beef; and in a thought, the kettles were buffaloes' dried humps. The pioneers' caps became wine-coolers, and their aprons napkins of damask. Grey-headed officers swallowed their own

swords, turned into macaroni. A cymbal-player was seen to devour his cymbals, suddenly changed into ratafia paste." What had been gunpowder was eaten by the handful as small saccharine comfits; cartridge-bullets were candied plums, and gave great pleasure both to horse and foot. Well, sir, it is not to be thought that discipline could survive temptation such as this. No, sir: at first there was vast astonishment; then a low murmur of delight ran through either host; then there was a mighty smacking of lips; and then the opposing armies laughed a tremendous laugh, and embraced. On this a solemn cacchination escaped the great God Jocus, who, uncrossing his legs, vanished. The news flew among the women of Turveytop, who, coming and bringing their children to the field, made merry with the army. A banquet was resolved upon; it was but rightful thanksgiving to the benevolent Jocus, whose noble practical jest had saved the blood of Turveytop; and more, had provided, yea, in the very engines of war, the wherewithal to comfort the bowels and rejoice the heart of man. The substance of dried meats was found in gun carriages; delicious cheeses were in the wheels; and pikes and halberds were nought more deadly than attenuated sausage, pungent and aromatic. The great guns, too—charged as it was thought with agony and death for thousands—contained nothing more mischievous than ruby wine. The cannon shot, turned to corks, were now withdrawn; and the armies ate and drank, and laughed and sang, and danced, and gave hearty thanks to the great God Jocus."

"And so the matter ended?"

"Even so, sir," replied the Hermit; "the field whereon the armies met was called, from that time, the Field of the Sage and Onions, those vegetables from that very day abounding there. And in memory of the time, the Turveytopians, in solemn procession, once a year gather of the produce to stuff their geese. You smile, sir. Think you, sir, it is not better to pull an

onion than to pluck laurel? There are fewer tears drawn by homely scallion than by the green leaf."

"A strange freak, sir," we said, "of the God Jocus! It was at that we smiled."

"A strange, yet mighty benevolence!" cried the Hermit. "Would that he—or some kindred beneficence—could descend upon carnivorous war, when and wheresoever it should purpose to feed, and turn its carving sword to sugar!"

"And pray, sir," asked we of the Hermit, "by what chance did you escape from the land of Turveytop?"

"I was turned out in my sleep; yes, carried away in deep slumber; for, waking one morning, I found myself at the foot of the mountain, which, I know not how long before, had opened to receive me."

"Your soul made clean—your heart spotless, as when first touched into life, and it began beating towards the grave?"

"I am afraid so," said the Hermit, with a remorseful sigh.

"Afraid?"

"Ay, sir," said he, "much afraid; seeing how stained and grimy they have since become. Every man has not the happiness of a purification in Turveytop; therefore, should not enduring cleanliness be looked for from the lucky ones? And yet, sir, the very best of us soil, ay, sooner than a bride's riband."

At this time the declining sun flamed goldenly through the casement. We looked, doubtless, yearningly towards it, for the Hermit rising, said, with solemn voice—"Let us abroad, and behold God Almighty in the heavens." Then taking his staff, he passed into the garden, and silently we followed him.

It was a glorious time. The air fell upon the heart like balm; the sky, gold and vermilion-flecked, hung, a celestial tent, above mortal man; and the fancy-quickened ear heard sweet, low music from the heart of earth, rejoicing in that hour of gladness.

"Evenings such as this," said the Hermit, after a pause, "seem to me the very holiday time of death; an hour in which the slayer, throned in glory, smiles benevolently down on man. Here, on earth, he gets hard names among us for the unseemliness of his looks, and the cruelty of his doings; but in an hour like this, death seems to me loving and radiant,—a great bounty, spreading an immortal feast, and showing the glad dwelling-place he leads men to."

"It would be great happiness could we always think so. For so considered, death is, indeed, a solemn beneficence—a smiling liberator, turning a dungeon door upon immortal day. But when death, with slow and torturing device, hovers about his groaning prey; when, like a despot cunning in his malice, he makes disease and madness his dallying serfs"——

"Merciful God!" cried the Hermit, "spare me that final terror! Let me not be whipped and scourged by long, long suffering to death—be dragged, a shrieking victim, downward to the grave; but let my last hour be solemn, tranquil, that so, with open, unblenched eyes, I may look at coming death, and feel upon my cheek his kiss of peace!"

Thus spoke the Hermit, with passionate fervour. His mind seemed solemnly uplifted. We turned aside from him, following one of the many garden paths. After some minutes, the Hermit came up with us. He was again the cheerful, light-hearted anchorite. "What say you," said he, "to pass an hour or so at 'the Gratis?'"

"Where we shall meet the villagers of Clovernook?"

"Some of them, at least," said the Hermit. "I have not been there these three weeks. This way: we shall have time to stroll a round; there are some ruins—for Clovernook has its antiquities—I shall be glad to show you." The Hermit led the way from the garden, and with a few strides we found ourselves in a delicious green lane. "This," said he of Bellyfulle, "is called Velvet-

path, and leads eastwardly to the village. What do you pause at?" asked the Hermit, as we suddenly stopped, listening to sheep-bells, that sounded at various distances, and in various notes, through the balmy air.

"The sheep-bells. How beautifully toned," we said. "Of all rustic sounds, our favourite music."

"To me," said the Hermit, "the sheep-bell sounds of childhood; yea, of babyhood. In the world without us, it hath often been to me a solace and a sweetness. I have seen little of the green earth—knew, alas! how little of its softening loveliness, its beautiful records of God's tenderness to man in herbs and flowers, that in their beauty seem sown by angel hands for man's delight. Of these things I had little seen or known; I was so early built up in the bricks of a city: otherwise, sir, harsh thoughts and foolish sneers, evil and folly begotten in a too-early, sordid strife with man, perhaps, had not defiled me. The sheep-bell was the one remembrance—the one thought still dwelling in my brain, and with its sometime music calling up a scene of rustic Sabbath quietude. Swelling meads in their soft greenness; hedge-rows, and their sparkling flowers; a row of chesnut trees in blossoming glory; a park; a flock of nibbling sheep—a child, the mute yet happy wonderer at all."

"And the scene charmed by the simple sheep-bell?"

"Even now," said the Hermit, "it is in certain moods my best music. Many an evening have I seated myself on that mossy cushion, at the foot of yonder beech-tree, and leaning back with folded hands and closed eyes, have let my brain drink and drink its stilling sounds; and I have gone off into day-dreams, heaven knows where. I have been in the holy East; have heard the flocks of the Patriarchs, and seen Rebecca at the well."

Thus talking, we had proceeded half-way up Velvet-path, when a man in rustic dress, followed by a sheep-dog, came over a stile close upon us. He immediately

paused, and taking off his hat, accosted the Hermit—"A blessed evening, this."

"All's well?" asked the sage.

"All's well," answered the man. The Hermit smiled and bowed, and saying, "God be with you, Joseph," passed on.

"Who is he?" we asked.

"My shepherd," answered the Hermit of Bellyfulle; "and I would answer for it even upon parchment, as honest, simple a creature as a day-old lamb. Look at him: I warrant me he is about to play his evening music to his dog."

It was even so; for turning round we saw Joseph seated under a tree, vehemently twanging a Jew's-harp. "A strange instrument for a shepherd."

"He hath wonderful knowledge of that piece of iron," said the Hermit; "nor is it strange it should be so. For twenty years it was, in the outside world, the constant companion of his lips."

"Indeed! what was your shepherd, ere in happy hour he came to Clovernook?"

"He was door-keeper to a sponging-house. Yes, he was the janitor; the demon of the iron grill; and would solace his darkness and captivity (for keeper of prisoners, he himself was the greatest) with that vocal metal. Poor wretch! That fourpenny harp was his comfort—his consolation—his blithe society."

"Is he not a Jew?" we asked.

"Yes; and served a Hebrew master," answered the Hermit, who smilingly added, "I knew the gentleman well."

"Pray, sir, has your philosophy discovered why, of all men, Jews—at first a pastoral, country-loving people—should delight to take service under the sheriff, so that they may carry away captive the spendthrift and the wretched, holding the human chattels under lock and key? Why, of all folks, should Jews delight to be bailiffs?"

"It may be," said the Hermit, "in memory and

sweet revenge of the Egyptian bondage. Poor things! they still make bricks, too; ay, and brick houses; though the cruelty of modern law, I hear, denies them straw bail."

"How earnestly the dog watches the musician's face!" we cried; for the animal, sitting upright, stared with contemplative looks at the shepherd. "We never saw more meaning in a cur's countenance."

"Humph! Strange things are told of that dog," said the Hermit. "Joseph insists upon it that the spirit of a London money-lender, an old acquaintance, animates Flip. You may be sure, sir, I have no such superstition, or would hardly trust my flocks within range of its teeth. Yet has the dog marvellous sagacity. Put a bad shilling among a hundred good ones, and Flip, with sensitive nostril, will detect the counterfeit. Many a man, sir, would think it impossible to earn higher praise. A fine, elevating gift, sir, that quick sense of bad money. I knew a man—poor fellow! —who bought the faculty at what you and I should think a great cost. It is an odd story, but true, sir—true as the stars. I call the tale the

Tragedy of the Till.

"A strange, household title," said we; "pray relate it."

"You would hardly think, sir, that the matter happened in London? In a mean, obscure street; a place where the hard realities of life knocked daily, hourly, at people's hearts? Where the men and women seemed only made to work, and eat, and sleep, and die; the unideal, moving things of the world, the mere biped furniture of the earth. And yet, sordid and barren as the spot may be, there is the restless spirit of man, yearning and struggling to deliver itself from the squalor that defiles it. See man, the natural monarch of the earth, styed like a hog. Why, even there, in chin-deep misery, visions will now and then glorify the habitation. The poetic spirit—for what is hope but the

poetry of daily life?—will touch the coarsest soul that answers, like a harp-string to the wind, unconscious of the power that stirs it. Let this remembrance go with you, and you shall behold no place where man is mean or common. Take the thought with you in nooks and alleys, where the sweet air of heaven sickens with disease, and man seems not made of the earth of Paradise, but of city mud, a stark, foul, brutish thing; even there man is glorified by his hopes, that, like angel-faces in a dungeon, brighten and beautify his prison. Let us imagine, sir," said the Hermit, letting his ivory staff fall in his arm, and leaning against a huge, sheltering sycamore—"let us imagine some city quarter, in which the inhabitants—miserable creatures!—should be bereaved of all hope. A little higher only would they be than apes. They would seem to us the lay-figures of humanity; moving images, with tongues to wag and eyes to open. We should behold their habitations with shuddering looks and shrinking nose, and hurry from the spot, as though fever and poverty clawed like demons at our skirts, to taint and ruin us. Any way, the dwellers of Hopeless Quarter would seem to us—dignified as we are by four meals a day, and with no rent in our coats, no crack in our shoe-leather—as forlorn animals, permitted on the earth for some mysterious purpose, but who, though something like ourselves in outward guise, had nothing else in common with us! Would not such be the belief of many of us?"

"It is more than likely," we answered.

"Why, sir," cried the Hermit, with a grave look, "it *is* our creed. Every street, lane, or alley that harbours the wretched poor, is, to our gingerly apprehension, Hopeless Quarter. We wholly avoid it; or if otherwise, with our moral thumb and finger holding our moral nose, we hurry through it. We cast a rapid look at the forlorn inhabitants—a frightened glance in at doorways and down cellars—and never for one brief minute think, that beneath that outward husk of hu-

manity, that in those miserable abiding-places of mortal suffering, there is the aspect, and the earthly refuge of the future angel. Many a time, sir," said the Sage of Bellyfulle, "I have walked the streets, and day-dreaming, have fashioned to myself the doings, the hopes and cares of the householders. To my fancy, the brick walls of the houses have turned to glass, and I have seen all that passed inside. Well, I have been rarely rapt by what I have beheld in the palaces and mansions of the rich. There, human life, when at the purest and the best, is as a graceful nymph, whose slightest motion is silent music—whose look is sweet, intelligent serenity —whose breath is odorous as morning air. Beautiful is her speech; for she talks lilies and roses. There is an atmosphere about her that steals upon the heart, and lulls it into sweet placidity. But, sir, the heart knows not—or should not know—such dreamy rest at the doors of the very poor. No; its blood quickens and glows as it beholds the daily battle. There are the poor fighting with the world, that, like a huge machine set in motion by some necromantic wickedness, has action, speech, cunning, force tremendous, everything but heart. A mighty creature, bloodless and pulseless. Great are the odds against poverty in the strife. Alas! alas! how often is the poor man the compelled Quixote; made to attack a windmill in the hope that he may get a handful of the corn it grinds?"

"Even so," said we; "and many and grievous are his buffets ere the miller—the prosperous fellow with the golden thumb—rewards poor poverty for the unequal battle."

"There it is," cried the Hermit. "There is the heroism which, at the houses of the poor, has made me see and feel the majesty of poverty; has in my eyes made starveling spinners and weavers more than kingly. It is a fine show, a golden sight, to see the crowning of a king. I have beheld the ceremony—with undazzled eyes have well considered all its blaze of splendour. A

tender thing to think of is the kiss of peace ; beautiful the homage ; heart-stirring the voice of the champion, when the brave knight dashes his defying gauntlet on the marble stone ; very solemn the anointing—and most uplifting the song of jubilate when all is done. But, sir, to my coarse apprehension, I have seen a nobler sight than this—a grander ceremony, even at the hearth-stone of the poor. I will show you a man, worn, spent ; the bony outline of a human thing, with toil and want, cut, as with an iron tool, upon him ; a man to whom the common pleasures of this our mortal heritage are unknown as the joys of Paradise. This man toils and starves, and starves and toils, even as the markets vary. Well, he keeps a heart, sound as oak, in his bosom. In the sanctity of his soul, bestows the kiss of peace upon a grudging world : he compels the homage of respect, and champions himself against the hardness of fortune. In his wretched homestead he is throned in the majesty of the affections. His suffering, patient, loving wife—his pale-faced, ill-clad children—are his queen and subjects. He is a king in heart, subduing and ruling the iron hours ; unseen spirits of love and goodness anoint him ; and, sir," said the Hermit, in a solemn voice—" as surely as the kingdom of God is more than a fairy tale, so surely do God's angels sing that poor man's jubilate."

Here the Hermit paused ; and then, grasping his staff, walked silently on. He seemed for a time brooding over new thoughts. At length he looked round with his sunny smile, and his eye twinkled again. " Depend upon it," he said, " you shall hear more of Joseph and his dog. Ay, there he is, still twanging to him. Poor fellow, when he kept the key of the bailiff's house, his chief company was the canary of the bailiff's wife. He would finger his Jew's-harp against the bird's flying notes, and I verily believe felt all the envy of a musical rival. The canary, with its shower of sounds, fairly smothered the Jew's-harp ; and I believe Joseph, in

tranquil despair, thought of hanging it upon the willow, when a cat chewed up the yellow songster. No singing woman ever hated a sister syren with greater zeal than did Joseph hate that canary."

"But, sir," we ventured to observe, "you have forgotten the story, or Tragedy of the Till."

"True," replied the Hermit. "It is a strange tale, but it hath the recommendation of brevity. Some folks may see nothing in it but the tricksiness of an extravagant spirit; and some, perchance, may pluck a heart of meaning out of it. However, be it as it may, you shall hear it, sir. There was a man called Isaac Pugwash, a dweller in a miserable slough of London, a squalid denizen of one of the foul nooks of that city of Plutus. He kept a shop; which, though small as a cabin, was visited as granary and store-house by half the neighbourhood. All the creature-comforts of the poor—from bread, to that questionable superfluity, small-beer—were sold by Isaac. Strange it was, that with such a trade, Pugwash grew not rich. He had many bad debts; and of all shop-keepers, was most unfortunate in false coin. Certain it is, he had neither eye nor ear for bad money. Counterfeit semblances of majesty beguiled him out of bread, and butter, and cheese, and red herring, just as readily as legitimate royalty struck at the Mint. Malice might impute something of this to the political principles of Pugwash, who, as he had avowed himself again and again, was no lover of a monarchy. Nevertheless, I cannot think Pugwash had so little regard for the countenance of majesty, as to welcome it as readily when silvered copper as when sterling silver. No, a wild, foolish enthusiast was Pugwash, but in the household matter of good and bad money he had very wholesome prejudices. He had a reasonable wish to grow rich, yet was entirely ignorant of the by-ways and short-cuts to wealth. He would have sauntered through life with his hands in his pockets, and a daisy in his mouth; and dying with just enough in his house to pay

the undertaker, would have thought himself a fortunate fellow ; he was, in the words of Mrs. Pugwash, such a careless, foolish, dreaming creature. He was cheated every hour by a customer of some kind ; and yet to deny credit to any body, he would as soon have denied the wife of his bosom. His customers knew the weakness, and failed not to exercise it. To be sure, now and then, fresh from conjugal counsel, he would refuse to add a single herring to a debtor's score ; no, he would not be sent to the workhouse by any body. A quarter of an hour after, the denied herring, with an added small loaf, was given to the little girl, sent to the shop by the rejected mother, — 'he couldn't bear to see poor children wanting anything.'

"Pugwash had another unprofitable weakness. He was fond of what he called nature, though in his dim, close shop, he could give her but a stifling welcome. Nevertheless, he had the earliest primroses on his counter, — 'they threw,' he said, 'such a nice light about the place.' A sly, knavish customer presented Isaac with a pot of polyanthuses, and, won by the flowery gift, Pugwash gave the donor ruinous credit. The man with wallflowers regularly stopt at Isaac's shop, and for only sixpence, Pugwash would tell his wife he had made the place a Paradise. 'If we can't go to nature, Sally, isn't it a pleasant thing to be able to bring nature to us ?' Whereupon Mrs. Pugwash would declare, that a man with at least three children to provide for had no need to talk of nature. Nevertheless, the flower-man made his weekly call. Though at many a house, the penny could not every week be spared to buy a hint, a look of nature for the darkened dwellers about him, Isaac, despite of Mrs. Pugwash, always purchased. It is a common thing, an old familiar cry," said the Hermit —"to see the poor man's florist, to hear his loud-voiced invitation to take his nosegays, his penny-roots ; and yet is it a call, a conjuration of the heart of man over-laboured and desponding—walled in by the gloom of a

town—divorced from the fields and their sweet healthful influences—almost shut out from the sky that reeks in vapour over him ;—it is a call that tells him there are things of the earth beside food and covering to live for ; and that God in his great bounty hath made them for all men. Is it not so ?" asked the Hermit.

"Most certainly," we answered ; "it would be the very sinfulness of avarice to think otherwise."

"Why, sir," said the Hermit benevolently smiling, "thus considered, the loud-lunged city bawler of roots and flowers becomes a high benevolence, a peripatetic priest of nature. Adown dark lanes and miry alleys he takes sweet remembrances—touching records of the loveliness of earth, that with their bright looks and balmy odours cheer and uplift the dumpish heart of man ; that make his soul stir within him, and acknowledge the beautiful. The penny, the ill-spared penny—for it would buy a wheaten roll—the poor housewife pays for root of primrose, is her offering to the hopeful loveliness of nature ; is her testimony of the soul struggling with the blighting, crushing circumstance of sordid earth, and sometimes yearning towards earth's sweetest aspects. Amidst the violence, the coarseness, and the suffering that may surround and defile the wretched, there must be moments when the heart escapes, craving for the innocent and lovely ; when the soul makes for itself even of a flower a comfort, and a refuge."

The Hermit paused a moment, and then in blither voice resumed. "But I have strayed a little from the history of our small tradesman, Pugwash. Well, sir, Isaac for some three or four years kept on his old way, his wife still prophesying in loud and louder voice the inevitable workhouse. He would so think and talk of nature when he should mind his shop ; he would so often snatch a holiday to lose it in the fields, when he should take stock and balance his books. What was worse, he every week lost more and more by bad money. With no more sense than a buzzard, as Mrs. Pugwash

said, for a good shilling, he was the victim of those laborious folks who make their money with a fine independence of the state, out of their own materials. It seemed the common compact of a host of coiners to put off their base-born offspring upon Isaac Pugwash; who, it must be confessed, bore the loss and the indignity like a Christian martyr. At last, however, the spirit of the man was stung. A guinea, as Pugwash believed of statute gold, was found to be of little less value than a brass button. Mrs. Pugwash clamoured and screamed as though a besieging foe was in her house; and Pugwash himself felt that further patience would be pusillanimity. Whereupon, sir, what think ye Isaac did? Why, he suffered himself to be driven by the voice and vehemence of his wife to a conjurer, who in a neighbouring attic was a sideral go-between to the neighbourhood—a vender of intelligence from the stars, to all who sought and duly fee'd him. This magician would declare to Pugwash the whereabout of the felon coiner, and—the thought was an anodyne to the hurt mind of Isaac's wife—the knave would be law-throttled.

"With sad, indignant spirit did Isaac Pugwash seek Father Lotus; for so, sir, was the conjurer called. He was none of your common wizards. Oh no! he left it to the mere quack-salvers and mountebanks of his craft to take upon them a haggard solemnity of look, and to drop monosyllables, heavy as bullets, upon the ear of the questioner. The mighty and magnificent hocuspocus of twelvepenny magicians was scorned by Lotus. There was nothing in his look or manner that showed him the worse for keeping company with spirits; on the contrary, perhaps, the privileges he enjoyed of them served to make him only the more blithe and jocund. He might have passed for a gentleman, at once easy and cunning in the law; his sole knowledge, that of labyrinthine sentences made expressly to wind poor common sense on parchment. He had an eye like a snake, a constant smile upon his lip, a cheek coloured like an

apple, and an activity of movement wide away from the solemnity of the conjurer. He was a small, eel-figured man of about sixty, dressed in glossy black, with silver buckles and flowing periwig. It was impossible not to have a better opinion of sprites and demons, seeing that so nice, so polished a gentleman was their especial pet. And then, his attic had no mystic circle, no curtain of black, no death's head, no mummy of apocryphal dragon—the vulgar catch-pennies of fortune-telling trader. There was not even a pack of cards to elevate the soul of man into the regions of the mystic world. No, the room was plainly yet comfortably set out. Father Lotus reposed in an easy chair, nursing a snow-white cat upon his knee; now tenderly patting the creature with one hand, and now turning over a little Hebrew volume with the other. If a man wished to have dealings with sorry demons, could he desire a nicer little gentleman than Father Lotus to make the acquaintance for him? In few words, Isaac Pugwash told his story to the smiling magician. He had, amongst much other bad money, taken a counterfeit guinea; could Father Lotus discover the evil-doer?

"'Yes, yes, yes,' said Lotus, smiling, 'of course—to be sure; but that will do but little: in your present state,—let me look at your tongue.' Pugwash obediently thrust the organ forth. 'Yes, yes, as I thought. 'Twill do you no good to hang the rogue; none at all. What we must do is this—we must cure you of the disease.'

"'Disease!' cried Pugwash. 'Bating the loss of my money, I was never better in all my days.'

"'Ha! my poor man,' said Lotus, 'it is the benevolence of nature, that she often goes on, quietly breaking us up, we knowing no more of the mischief than a girl's doll when the girl rips up its seams. Your malady is of the perceptive organs. Leave you alone, and you'll sink to the condition of a baboon.'

"'God bless me!' cried Pugwash.

"'A jackass with sense to choose a thistle from a toadstool will be a reasoning creature to you; for consider, my poor soul,' said Lotus in a compassionate voice, 'in this world of tribulation we inhabit, consider, what a benighted nincompoop is man, if he cannot elect a good shilling from a bad one.'

"'I have not a sharp eye for money,' said Pugwash modestly. 'It's a gift, sir; I'm assured it's a gift.'

"'A sharp eye! An eye of horn,' said Lotus. 'Never mind, I can remedy all that; I can restore you to the world and to yourself. The greatest physicians, the wisest philosophers, have, in the profundity of their wisdom, made money the test of wit. A man is believed mad; he is a very rich man, and his heir has very good reason to believe him lunatic; whereupon the heir, the madman's careful friend, calls about the sufferer a company of wizards to sit in judgment on the suspected brain, and report a verdict thereupon. Well, ninety-nine times out of the hundred, what is the first question put, as test of reason? Why, a question of money. The physician, laying certain pieces of current coin in his palm, asks of the patient their several value. If he answer truly, why truly there is hope; but if he stammer, or falter at the coin, the verdict runs, and wisely runs, mad—very mad.'

"'I 'm not so bad as that,' said Pugwash, a little alarmed.

"'Don't say how you are—it 's presumption in any man,' cried Lotus. 'Nevertheless, be as you may, I 'll cure you, if you 'll give attention to my remedy.'

"'I 'll give my whole soul to it,' exclaimed Pugwash.

"'Very good, very good; I like your earnestness, but I don't want all your soul,' said Father Lotus, smiling—'I want only part of it: that, if you confide in me, I can take from you with no danger. Aye, with less peril than the pricking of a whitlow. Now, then, for examination. Now, to have a good stare at this soul of yours.' Here Father Lotus gently removed the white

cat from his knee, for he had been patting her all the time he talked, and turned full round upon Pugwash. 'Turn out your breeches' pockets,' said Lotus—and the tractable Pugwash immediately displayed the linings. 'Humph!' cried Lotus, looking narrowly at the brown holland whereof they were made—'very bad, indeed; very bad; never knew a soul in a worse state in all my life.'

"Pugwash looked at his pockets, and then at the conjurer: he was about to speak, but the fixed, earnest look of Father Lotus held him in respectful silence.

"'Yes, yes,' said the wizard, still eyeing the brown holland, 'I can see it all; a vagabond soul; a soul wandering here and there, like a pauper without a settlement; a ragamuffin soul.'

"Pugwash found confidence and breath. 'Was there ever such a joke?' he cried: 'know a man's soul by the linings of his breeches' pockets!' and Pugwash laughed, albeit uncomfortably.

"Father Lotus looked at the man with philosophic compassion. 'Ha, my good friend!' he said, 'that all comes of your ignorance of moral anatomy.'

"'Well, but Father Lotus'——

"'Peace,' said the wizard, 'and answer me. You 'd have this soul of your's cured?'

"'If there 's anything the matter with it,' answered Pugwash. 'Though not of any conceit I speak it, yet I think it as sweet and as healthy a soul as the souls of my neighbours. I never did wrong to anybody.'

"'Pooh!' cried Father Lotus.

"'I never denied credit to the hungry,' continued Pugwash.

"'Fiddle-de-dee!' said the wizard, very nervously.

"'I never laid out a penny in law upon a customer; I never refused small beer to'——

"'Silence!' cried Father Lotus; 'don't offend philosophy by thus boasting of your weaknesses. You are in a perilous condition; still you may be saved. At this

very moment, I much fear it, gangrene has touched your soul: nevertheless, I can separate the sound from the mortified parts, and start you new again as though your lips were first wet with mother's milk.'

"Pugwash merely said—for the wizard began to awe him—'I 'm very much obliged to you.'

"'Now,' said Lotus, 'answer a few questions, and then I 'll proceed to the cure. What do you think of money?'

"'A very nice thing,' said Pugwash, 'though I can do with as little of it as most folks.'

"Father Lotus shook his head. 'Well, and the world about you?'

"'A beautiful world,' said Pugwash; 'only the worst of it is, I can't leave the shop as often as I would to enjoy it. I 'm shut in all day long, I may say, a prisoner to brickdust, herrings, and bacon. Sometimes, when the sun shines, and the cobbler's lark over the way sings as if he 'd split his pipe, why then, do you know, I do so long to get into the fields; I do hunger for a bit of grass like any cow.'

"The wizard looked almost hopelessly on Pugwash. 'And that 's your religion and business? Infidel of the counter! Saracen of the till! However—patience,' said Lotus, 'and let us conclude.—And the men and women of the world, what do you think of them?'

"'God bless 'em, poor souls!' said Pugwash. 'It 's a sad scramble some of 'em have, isn't it?'

"'Well,' said the conjurer, 'for a tradesman, your soul is in a wretched condition. However, it is not so hopelessly bad that I may not yet make it profitable to you. I must cure it of its vagabond desires, and above all make it respectful of money. You will take this book.' Here Lotus took a little volume from a cupboard, and placed it in the hand of Pugwash. 'Lay it under your pillow every night for a week, and on the eighth morning let me see you.'

"'Come, there 's nothing easier than that,' said Pug-

wash, with a smile, and reverently putting the volume in his pocket—(the book was closed by metal clasps, curiously chased)—he descended the garret stairs of the conjurer.

"On the morning of the eighth day, Pugwash again stood before Lotus.

"'How do you feel now?' asked the conjurer, with a knowing look.

"'I hav'n't opened the book—'tis just as I took it,' said Pugwash, making no further answer.

"'I know that,' said Lotus; 'the clasps be thanked for your ignorance.' Pugwash slightly coloured; for to say the truth, both he and his wife had vainly pulled and tugged, and fingered and coaxed the clasps, that they might look upon the necromantic page. 'Well, the book has worked,' said the conjurer. 'I have it.'

"'Have it! what?' asked Pugwash.

"'Your soul,' answered the sorcerer. 'In all my practice,' he added, gravely, 'I never had a soul come into my hands in worse condition.'

"'Impossible!' cried Pugwash. 'If my soul is, as you say, in your own hands, how is it that I'm alive? how is it that I can eat, drink, sleep, walk, talk, do everything, just like any body else?'

"'Ha!' said Lotus, 'that's a common mistake. Thousands and thousands would swear, aye, as they'd swear to their own noses, that they have their souls in their own possession—bless you,' and the conjurer laughed maliciously, 'it's a popular error. Their souls are altogether out of 'em.'

"'Well,' said Pugwash, 'if it's true that you have, indeed, my soul, I should like to have a look at it.'

"'In good time,' said the conjurer; 'I'll bring it to your house, and put it in its proper lodging. In another week I'll bring it to you; 'twill then be strong enough to bear removal.'

"'And what am I to do all the time without it?' asked Pugwash, in a tone of banter. 'Come,' said he,

still jesting, 'if you really have my soul, what's it like —what's its colour; if indeed souls have colours?'

"'Green—green as a grasshopper, when it first came into my hands,' said the wizard; 'but 'tis changing daily. More; it was a skipping, chirping, giddy soul; 'tis every hour mending. In a week's time, I tell you, it will be fit for the business of the world.'

"'And pray, good father—for the matter has till now escaped me—what am I to pay you for this pain and trouble; for this precious care of my miserable soul?'

"'Nothing,' answered Lotus, 'nothing whatever. The work is too nice and precious to be paid for; I have a reward you dream not of for my labour. Think you that men's immortal souls are to be mended like iron pots, at tinker's price? Oh, no! they who meddle with souls go for higher wages.'

"After further talk Pugwash departed—the conjurer promising to bring him home his soul at midnight, that night week. It seemed strange to Pugwash, as the time passed on, that he never seemed to miss his soul; that, in very truth, he went through the labours of the day with even better gravity than when his soul possessed him. And more; he began to feel himself more at home in his shop; the cobbler's lark over the way continued to sing, but awoke in Isaac's heart no thought of the fields: and then for flowers and plants, why Isaac began to think such matters fitter the thoughts of children and foolish girls, than the attention of grown men, with the world before them. Even Mrs. Pugwash saw an alteration in her husband; and though to him she said nothing, she returned thanks to her own sagacity that made him seek the conjurer.

"At length the night arrived when Lotus had promised to bring home the soul of Pugwash. He sent his wife to bed, and sat with his eyes upon the Dutch clock, anxiously awaiting the conjurer. Twelve o'clock struck, and at the same moment Father Lotus smote the door-post of Isaac Pugwash.

"'Have you brought it?' asked Pugwash.

"'Or wherefore should I come?' said Lotus. 'Quick: show a light to the till, that your soul may find itself at home.'

"'The till!' cried Pugwash; 'what the devil should my soul do in the till?'

"'Speak not irreverently,' said the conjurer, 'but show a light.'

"'May I live for ever in darkness if I do!' cried Pugwash.

"'It is no matter,' said the conjurer; and then he cried, 'Soul, to your earthly dwelling-place! Seek it—you know it.' Then turning to Pugwash, Lotus said, 'It is all right. Your soul 's in the till.'

"'How did it get there?' cried Pugwash in amazement.

"'Through the slit in the counter,' said the conjurer; and ere Pugwash could speak again, the conjurer had quitted the shop.

"For some minutes Pugwash felt himself afraid to stir. For the first time in his life, he felt himself ill at ease—left as he was with no other company save his own soul. He at length took heart, and went behind the counter that he might see if his soul was really in the till. With trembling hand he drew the coffer, and there, to his amazement, squatted like a tailor, upon a crown-piece, did Pugwash behold his own soul, which cried out to him in notes no louder than a cricket's—'How are you? *I* am comfortable.' It was a strange yet pleasing sight to Pugwash, to behold what he felt to be his own soul embodied in a figure no bigger than the top joint of his thumb. There it was, a stark naked thing with the precise features of Pugwash; albeit the complexion was of a yellower hue. 'The conjurer said it was green,' cried Pugwash; 'as I live, if that be my soul—and I begin to feel a strange, odd love for it—it is yellow as a guinea. Ha! ha! Pretty, precious, darling soul!' cried Pugwash, as the creature

took up every piece of coin in the till, and rang it with such a look of rascally cunning, that sure I am Pugwash would in past times have hated the creature for the trick. But every day Pugwash became fonder and fonder of the creature in the till; it was to him such a counsellor, and such a blessing. Whenever the old flower-man came to the door, the soul of Pugwash from the till would bid him pack with his rubbish: if a poor woman—an old customer it might be—begged for the credit of a loaf, the Spirit of the Till, calling through the slit in the counter, would command Pugwash to deny her. More: Pugwash never again took a bad shilling. No sooner did he throw the pocket-piece down upon the counter, than the voice from the till would denounce its worthlessness. And the soul of Pugwash never quitted the till. There it lived, feeding upon the colour of money, and capering, and rubbing its small scoundrel hands in glee as the coin dropt—dropt in. In time, the soul of Pugwash grew too big for so small a habitation, and then Pugwash moved his soul into an iron box; and some time after, he sent his soul to his banker's—the thing had waxed so big and strong on gold and silver."

"And so," we observed, "the man flourished, and the conjurer took no wages for all he did to the soul of Pugwash?"

"Hear the end," said the Hermit. "For some time, it was a growing pleasure to Pugwash to look at his soul, busy as it always was with the world-buying metals. At length he grew old—very old; and every day his soul grew uglier. Then he hated to look upon it; and then his soul would come to him, and grin its deformity at him. Pugwash died, almost rich as an Indian king—but he died, shrieking in his madness, to be saved from the terrors of his own soul."

"And such the end," we said; such the Tragedy of the Till. A strange romance."

"Romance," said the Sage of Bellyfulle; "sir, 'tis a story true as life. For at this very moment how many

thousands, blind and deaf to the sweet looks and voice of nature, live and die with their Souls in a Till?"

We answered not, but for some minutes followed the Hermit in silence, as he stept along Velvet Path; and the beauty of the place seemed to us to increase at every foot-fall. "What picturesque trees!" we suddenly cried, making a dead halt before two withered yews.

"Said I not," asked the Hermit, with a smile, "that Clovernook had its ruins?"

"There is a noble desolation in their dead trunks—their bare pronged branches. In their sapless nakedness, with flower, and leaf, and blade springing around them; they stand solemn mementos of the end of all things."

"True," answered the Hermit; "eloquently doth a dead tree preach to the heart of man—touching its appeal from the myriad forms of life bursting about it! Yes, the dead oak of a wood, for a time, gives wholesome check to the heart, expanding and dancing with the vitality around. In its calm aspect, its motionless look, it works the soul to solemn thought, lifting it upwards from the earth."

"There is a desolate grandeur in these old yews," we cried.

"Poor things," said the smiling Sage, "they were cruelly killed,—though, doubtless, murdered with the best intentions. Look at them, sir, in their majestic ruins; contemplate their magnificent nakedness; and then, sir, drop at least one tear for their untimely fate,—poor withered victims of the fantasy of woman!"

"Of woman!" we exclaimed. "How, sir, of woman?"

"How many springs might they have flourished!" cried the Hermit, with a restrained humour curling his lip, and twinkling in his eye; "how many autumns might they have borne their pinky berries!—how many pairs of little birds might have wedded and built in their boughs, and brought up rejoicing families!—but that woman, sir, fantastic tyrannous woman, killed them in

their prime—slew them in their green strength—made dead timber of their expanding greatness. Thus, sir," cried the Sage of Bellyfulle, "doth the female creature sometimes blight the budding hopes of man, and change the flourishing hero into a dead log. Poor ignorant souls! when they do worst murder, they call it love. They take a tough yew-tree in hand, and working their charms upon it, turn it into very touchwood. They seize the hardest heart of stubborn man; and like a lump of dough, they toss it and thump it, and roll it out, and lump it together again; and now make fancy pie-crust of it—and now a homely dumpling. Oh, sir! whenever I feel my just anger at the ways of woman subsiding into unmanly softness, I come and look at these yews, and am stirred up again. The elephant, it is said, whets his tusks upon the gnarled trunks of trees. Upon these yews do I from time to time sharpen up my blunted indignation."

"Ha! as we thought. Then these yews bear a legend?"

"Yea," said the Hermit, with mock affliction; "most fruitful is their barrenness—most abounding in matter for contemplation are their nude and ghastly branches. Think you, sir, you have the heart to listen to the story?"

"At least, we'll try," was our answer; and the Hermit, affecting to wipe a tear from his eyes with the back of his broad hand, and then heaving a profound preparatory sigh, began the tale.

The Legend of Noses; or, the Old Maids' Green Husbands.

"The precise date of this history," said the Hermit, "is lost in one of the corner cupboards of time; but once it was, believe me, fresh as Eve's cheek—and still the unwrinkled spirit of truth dwells in it, making it as a tale of yesterday. Beautiful truth! never young and

never old ; but keeping, through all change and all time, its bloom and grace of Paradise, even to the Judgment.

"Well, sir, it is somewhere written in our Chronicles of Clovernook, that once upon a time two gentle maidens, by name Bridget and Veronica, came from the outside world, and entering the Valley of Naps, and taking their due rest at the Warming-Pan, and leaving what was dim and worn in their looks at the shrine of the Looking-Glass, they were at length, according to custom, admitted among the happy villagers. They never told their story ; but it was plain they had jilted some poor innocent men out of their hearts, they were so wont to giggle, and laugh, and—not to speak it irreverently before the blooming faces of the whole sex—would rejoice like two successful pickers of pockets, or other flourishing malefactors. With all this, it was plain that they were sometimes not at their ease. It was marked of them that they would frequently wander to the very top of Gossip-Hill, and there, unmindful of the dewy grass, would drop themselves despairingly down, and sit watching and watching, with their faces toward the Valley of Naps, as though they expected some old acquaintance to arrive thereby. The simple-hearted chronicler who has set this down—what an innocent, milk-white goose must have bred his pen !—confesses that he knows not whom Bridget and Veronica could expect. Perhaps, says he, it may have been their brothers ; perhaps their uncles. Of course, sir, it was the weak, foolish young men whom they had barbarously stript of their affections, and left to perish on the world's highway ; these it was for whom Bridget and Veronica risked sciatica and rheumatic pains, nailed, as it would seem, hour after hour, upon the green-sward, looking for lost love.

"Ha, sir, here is a lesson, if the obstinacy of woman would only let her con it. Consider, sir ; call to mind the barbarous impertinence of those two young women—when with murderous and triumphant eyes they walked the world—relentlessly dragging forlorn young men by

their heartstrings through briar and brake ; over flints, through gutters, and up dreary, winding lanes ; still dragging them onward, onward, and now and then turning round, and with settled malice smiling, and showing their red, pulpy lips, and cruellest white teeth. Consider these homicidal maidens in their flaunting hours of conquest, stepping with mincing steps upon men's hearts, and deeming in their arrogance that they conferred much honour with the points of their toes. Ha, sir ! such pictures make a bold man shudder at the tyranny of woman ! In his virtuous indignation at such violent wrong, he feels that no punishment can revenge him upon the sex ! And then, alas ! sir, when he sees the poor forlorn things sorry for what they have done—when, victims to their own dreadful ignorance, like a babe that hath unwittingly let off a blunderbuss, they are laid prostrate, fairly knocked down by their own act, why, sir—philosopher and flinty-bosomed fellow as I am —I feel myself ashamed when I pity them."

"Yet, after all, it is a magnanimous softness," said we, falling in with the humour of the sage.

"And thus, sir, I have felt two tears, big as ordinary marbles, roll adown my cheeks, when I have read the simple text of the simple chronicler, who relates that, night after night, Bridget and Veronica, still seated on the cold and colder grass, looked down into the Valley of Naps. Poor things ! Every night their fancy believed that their lovers—the scolded, kicked, spurned dogs of other days—were with hopeful faces struggling towards the Warming-Pan, and would, with the morrow's sun, enter Clovernook ! Alas, and alas ! can we doubt that the young men had wedded themselves to kinder, more compassionate mates, and that oft, when their late mistresses were watching for them —watching and shivering in the night wind—they, snug fellows, were in their first sleep, close by their happy wives ? Yet still would Bridget and Veronica, seated on the damp grass, feel that every night their

hopes grew colder and colder; and then would they look up at the stars, and then would Venus seem to wink reproachfully down upon them, saying in that wink,—'Oh, Bridget and Veronica, what fools you were!'

"Time passed on—winter came—and Bridget and Veronica, warned by the sudden bite of rheumatic pains, watched no more on Gossip-Hill. It was plain, they thought, that their lovers were dead, otherwise they must have followed them. Why, sir, the men lived to be happy great grandfathers, and died somewhere about fourscore and five. Bridget and Veronica suffered themselves to sink gracefully down upon their sorrow as though it were a cushion; came here to Velvet Path, built a sort of comfortable nunnery, and were—if history is to be trusted in anything—the inventresses of muffins."

"It is well," said we, "when the afflictions of the heart can be so profitably diverted."

"Thus, sir," replied the Hermit, "private sorrows often become public luxuries. I never cut my wintry muffin—never see the butter shining like bright amber upon it—that I do not feel a gentle swelling of the heart towards Bridget and Veronica. Though, to be sure, it is especially the bounden duty of women to bend all their little energies to the one task of lightening and adorning masculine human life. Sir," said the Hermit with a grave look, "when we think what women have brought upon us poor men, they owe us all sorts of muffins."

"What they have brought upon us!" we cried. "How, sir? What do you mean?"

"All the pain, the trouble, and the weariness of sinful life. Now, sir," said the Hermit, "muffins and other such innocent delights go a great way to break the Fall."

"They built a nunnery, you say? Why, there is no stone, no brick of it," cried we.

"No; a great evidence," replied the Hermit, "of

the antiquity of the legend. The less we find to prove the truth of a story, the greater should be our faith in it: such, sir, is the true antiquarian creed, and for myself, I am a devout believer. It is very true, the nunnery is gone; the oven to which mankind owes its first muffins is a thing of shadows. Nay, the said mankind with greasy chin, cheek-deep in muffins, may in its besetting ingratitude deny the very existence of Bridget and Veronica. What care I for that?—here, sir, in these old yews, their mournful, blighted husbands"——

"Husbands!"

"Husbands," repeated the Hermit; "I see and acknowledge them; even as in the sorrowful furbelow of a widow, I am made to acknowledge her departed spouse."

"Pray, sir, explain. What riddle is this? How came these dead, leafless trunks to be called the husbands of the maidens Bridget and Veronica? Their husbands forsooth!"

"Ay, sir," cried the Hermit; "and what was worse, their murdered mates. They stand, in their present desolation, gaunt witnesses of the volatility, the wilfulness of the sex. Yes, sir; they were stripped to the condition you see them in, and left upon the world. I will tell you—as, indeed, I have gathered it from the chronicler—how it was. For some years, Bridget and Veronica smiled graciously upon the villagers of Clovernook. Nevertheless, there was no man among them bold enough to return the courtesy. Yes, the women flung down their smiles, but no man with proper chivalry took them up. Well, sir, this could not go on. Bridget and Veronica felt, with increasing years, increasing philosophy; and precisely at the time that all men had resolved never to make them wives, they—stubborn souls!—determined not to wed the best, the noblest creature alive. The human heart has, of course, its pouting fits; it determines to live alone; to flee into desart places; to have no employment, that is, to love

nothing ; but to keep on sullenly beating, beating, beating, until death lays his little finger on the sulky thing, and all is still. This, the human heart, in some wayward fit proposes to itself, and thinks itself strong as adamant in its determination. Well, it goes away from the world, and straightway—shut from human company—it falls in love with a plant, a stone—yea, it dandles cat or dog, and calls the creature darling."

"True, sir ; it is the beautiful necessity of our nature to love something."

"And so Bridget and Veronica—sympathizing spinsters!—fell in love with these yew trees, and their love proved tragical to them ; for the yews withered, died under the affection. Patience, sir, and you shall know the whole history. When the sisters came here—so runs the legend—these yews were brave, wide-spreading trees ; freely flourishing, with Nature only tending them : broad robust fellows were they, when Bridget and Veronica cast their hearts upon them. And then the women, in the very fantasy of their passion, resolved to cut and trim the yews—to lop and trim them—into what they called shape. Doubtless, sir, you have seen in the outside world mummeries of the sort ; have seen trees taken out of Heaven's hand, and cut and trimmed into peacocks, pyramids, and nameless monsters ? Now Bridget and Veronica—at least let us award them such praise—eschewed all other shapes, save the form of man ; hence, had they the yew trees cunningly fashioned into two brave knights, with shield on arm and sword in hand. Thus did the maidens delicately show their yearning sympathies towards the sex—thus did they make manifest to all Clovernook the tenderness of their unrequited hearts. Poor souls! it would have been the worst surliness of man to grudge them such poor comfort : it was not for men who, in their own persons, had refused to become the living, fleshly protectors of Bridget and Veronica, to sneer at and condemn the vegetable substitutes, which, in the very meekness of misfortune,

the poor women had elected for their helpmates. If man will not become spouse to woman, is it just in him—is it even decent—to upbraid and make sorry mirth of the dear creature, if she wed herself to a yew, a cedar, a holly-bush? When, sir, I have beheld the virgin innocence of threescore fondling and feeding with tit-bits some wheezing, apoplectic Dutch pug, I have felt compassion, ay, heightened somewhat into admiration, for the poor soul, who, making the best of hard fortune—who, turning the slights of the world to the best account—has cheerfully, magnanimously, sunk the husband in the dog. When I have seen waning beauty begin to feed cockatoos and parrots, giving them sugar from her own mouth, I have felt for the hard condition of the feeder—have been moved to deepest pity for her strait. And thus, had I lived in the days of Bridget and Veronica, I could have cheerfully touched my bonnet to their yew-tree husbands, standing here in all weathers, knowing that it was not the fault of the poor maidens themselves—their first caprice excepted—that their spouses grew outside the house, when assuredly the dear women would have rather had them cosy at the fireside.

"Poor souls! The chronicler tells us that both Bridget and Veronica would, in the spring time, watch their shooting mates; would with softened hearts behold their tips of tender green, and strive to feel, with all the love of loving wives, renewed affection for their vegetable lords. In summer they would sit under the protecting shadow of their husbands, working needlework of such surpassing delicacy and brightness, that the degenerate women of our day never, even in day-dreams, see the like. Autumn, too, would find Bridget and Veronica constantly hovering near the knights; and in winter time, with the earth iron-bound, and icicles hanging from the eaves, sweet was it to the spirit of either wife to hear the robin red-breast, perched now upon the pummel of the knight's sword—now upon his casque—and

now upon his shoulder—singing a song of hope to desolation!"

"And yet, sir," we observed, "with all this tenderness, you say the women killed their growing husbands?"

"So says the chronicler," answered the Hermit, "and the evil happened after this manner. One winter the cold was terrible. Long was it before the breath of spring called forth the buds; and then, with all other things sprouting and shooting, the yew-tree knights showed not the green leaf. With a sweet superstition, Bridget and Veronica gave themselves up for lost; they believed that their lives depended upon the vitality of the yews: let the knights cease to bud, and they —their widows—must cease to breathe. They were even as the Hamadryads, and only held existence during the leafing of their lords. Long and sharp was the suspense. Day after day, the folks of Clovernook would call to know the best or worst. The husbands of Bridget and Veronica were especial favourites: middle-aged folks from their childhood remembered them; they had stood so boldly, valorously, through the storms of years; and then it had been so pleasant to watch the spring green steal upon the edge of their swords, to see it freshen up their shields, and break in their helmets. It was, too, an anxious time with the children of Clovernook to see the knights trimmed every autumn; to watch the cunning progress of the shears, as, in the artistic hands of the gardener, they worked in and out, above and below, reforming the wanderings of vegetation, and clipping vagrant and slovenly twigs into the proper trimness of knighthood. And at these clippings Bridget and Veronica were always present, directing with earnest and affectionate eye the operations of the steel; and, strange to say, every new autumn feeling a deeper love, a closer tie towards their pruned helpmates.

"At length the knights took new heart, and began to shoot. What a load was lifted off the hearts of Bridget

and Veronica! Their husbands—for by such fond names were the trees known to all Clovernook—were not dead; the pride and glory of the place still flourished. Again would the women sit and embroider beneath their shadows—again would they rejoice in the strength of their spouses. Fond human hopes—vain aspirations! It is true that the knights were alive and lusty; but frost—a mortal frost—had pinched both their noses; the prominent grace and beauty of the knightly countenance was gone; whatever else might shoot, the nose would never grow again!

"Now, sir, you or I might think a noseless knight far better than a knight defunct. Not so Bridget and Veronica: in the noble recklessness of their sex, they declared they would rather that their yew-tree husbands should have died outright, than stand through all weathers disgraced and noseless: there would have been dignity in complete death; but to be maimed, disfigured, made ridiculous by calamity, it was insupportable. Misery they could endure, but not mockery.

"Well, sir, in this time of tribulation, the gardener hazarded a hope. If the head of each knight were cut closer in, a new nose might be brought out; but then to show a diminished head upon the old broad shoulders would look disproportionate—ungainly. If a nose must be had, it could only be produced by lessening the knight from head to heel; by reducing the whole figure; indeed, by bringing down what was grand and gigantic into the proportions of very common life. Thus a nose might be obtained; but was it not to purchase a nose at, in sooth, a most preposterous price?

"The gardener had said enough. He had given it as his opinion that the noses might be restored, and it mattered not to Bridget and Veronica—poor headstrong women!—how it was brought about. A nose they would have, come what might: the gardener was ordered to produce the noses, and to leave the rest to fate. The day was fixed; all Clovernook attended the solemnity

and day after day, with breathless attention, hung upon the movements of the gardener, who, on the third day, had so successfully dwarfed one of the knights, that he looked no bigger than page to his unclipped companion. But then the little fellow had a beautiful nose; and in the very completeness of his countenance brought out the degradation of his noseless co-mate. A dwarf with a nose was by far more preferable than a giant without; and the next day the gardener was set to work to finish his labours. A few days, and the husbands of Bridget and Veronica again displayed their full-grown noses to the sun. To be sure, they had lost immensely both in height and bulk; but each had gained a nose.

"And Bridget and Veronica were contented, happy women; they looked at their husbands, and felt grateful for their noses. Alas, and alas! they knew not, dear souls, that they had bought noses with lives. But so it was; the poor fellows had been cut so close to the quick, had been so shorn, that they could not survive the treatment of the shears. In a word, sir, the yew-trees died; the husbands of Bridget and Veronica gave up leafing, and in a short time became the bare, unprofitable things you see them."

"And the women, sir, the maiden-widows of the yew-tree lords?"

"They saw no second spring. Their husbands had ceased to shoot, and they dropt with the fall of their leaf. It is strange that the dead, sapless trunks should have stood so long; but," said the Hermit, "I take it, they are kindly preserved by fate as lasting records of woman's wilfulness. To me, sir, these dry logs are touching orators. Indeed, are they not preachers of great counsel to what we jocosely call the gentle sex?"

"Counsel! what counsel?"

"This," answered He of Beilyfulle,—"that come what may, a woman should never risk the loss of a husband for the sake of his nose."

We will not venture to declare that the Hermit was too exhausted by the delivery of this truth to continue his talk; we think not. Nevertheless, we think that the story struck upon some chord in his heart, and made him for a time taciturn. Indeed, in the matter of noses, the Hermit could hardly escape suspicion; there was much equivocation in the centre of his face; was it a nose, or was it not? Had he been a sufferer from the caprice of the sex? We are afraid so.

With slow and silent steps we trod Velvet Path, following the silent Hermit. At length he paused before a barn. "There," said he, "there is another of our Clovernook ruins."

"A ruin!" we cried. "Indeed, it seems a goodly barn, in excellent, most perfect condition."

"True, sir, it seems so; and yet is it a ruin: what think you it once was? You cannot guess? Mint, hospital, or prison? Sir, it was a palace; a kingly abiding-place. Monarchs were crowned where now the folks of Clovernook thrash beans and wheat."

"Indeed!" we cried, and without a second thought were passing on, when the Hermit paused, and laid his hand upon our shoulder.

"Is not such a ruin," he asked, "of all antiquities most potent in its call to the heart and the imagination? To me it seems to hint the history of human kind. A palace and a barn! How far were men from the palace when they first laboured the earth! What changes of thought—what growth of energy—what subtlety—what calculation—what playing of man against man—motive against motive,—ere the king arose from among his fellows, and clay was deified by clay! What a leap from Adam's spade to Solomon's sceptre! Lingering here, dreaming on this spot, it seems to me that I can almost see the growth of the world; can almost behold the advance and struggle of the race, from the hour that all men tilled the earth, and tended flocks, to the first crowning of a king—a shepherd king! A palace and a barn!

"Now is it an abiding-place for men who, ages elapsed, are the things of ceremony; who, the pastoral days long gone, live a life of artificial wants, of artificial homage; whose best enjoyment is self-sacrifice to pomp; and now, time has run on, and the flail is heard where royal trumpets sounded. The sons of Adam quit fields and flocks to build a palace; the king is anointed; state keeps its court; death shoots his silent arrows; ages pass, the husbandman takes possession of the kingly palace, and winnows grain where monarchs held their sway. The palace turned to the barn seems to make goodly reparation. Adam gets his own again."

At length we reached the end of Velvet Path, which gently winding brought us to the door of the Gratis, the one hostelry of Clovernook. A few of the villagers were at the door, and greeted the Hermit with happy salutations; for, as they declared, he had been some time a stranger to them. "I should have come to the cell to-morrow," said an old man, whose turbaned head and expressive face made us curious to learn his history. "Who is he?" we asked of the Hermit, as he turned into the Gratis.

"We call him Mahomet," answered the Sage. "In the outside world he was a street-dealer in rhubarb."

"Mahomet! Surely not a Turk?" we cried.

"Why not?" asked the Hermit. "We leave the battles of creeds to the noisy, impudent world you come from. Here, in Clovernook, no man seeks to thrust himself between his fellow and Heaven."

"And have you a mosque in Clovernook? If not, where does your Turk worship?"

"Did I not, from Gossip Hill, point out the place? We have no other. There, all men, in their turn, communicate with the other world. There, all, in their turn, give place to one another; humility teaches them tolerance. No man here makes to himself a trading property in human souls; no man asserts for himself exclusive freehold in heaven. You are yet young amongst

us, sir, and I see marvel at my words ; you will find them true—true to the letter. Enough for the present ; come, I 'll show you to the parlour." We followed the Hermit, and in a few moments found ourselves in a large apartment, in which were about twenty persons seated in easy arm-chairs around a table. "My friend," said the Hermit, introducing us. All the company rose, and bowing towards us, cried "Welcome." They then took their seats, and instantly we felt as we were at home. As the villagers will, in due time, introduce themselves, we shall not now dwell upon their various characters. One man alone we will speak of. He looked so old, and yet so purified from the stains and marks of years, he seemed something more than mortal. His face was smooth and thin ; pale, too, as moonlight ; his eyes were of a clear, deep, piercing grey, and his snow-white hair, parted at the forehead, hung massively down his shoulders. His smile was sweet and guileless as the smile of a babe. A wreath of amaranth encircled his head. "Who is he ?" we asked of the Hermit ; and the Sage answered, "He is the oldest inhabitant."

At length, then, thought we, he is found ; at length we see in the body that strange, mysterious person, whose experience at times amazes a young and thoughtless generation. The Oldest Inhabitant ! How often do we hear his voice, like the voice of the cuckoo, coming to us from an unseen anatomy ! What garnered knowledge must be his ! What hard frosts has he chronicled ! What times of scarcity—what days of fatness ! Now doth he pass judgment upon gooseberries, declaring them to be the largest within his memory ; now doth he the like service to hail-stones ! And now precisely doth he measure the height of floods, and now weigh the weight of spent thunder ! There is something solemn, too, in the Oldest Inhabitant. He is the link between the dead and the living : in the course of nature, the next to be called from among us ; his place immediately supplied by a second brother. Generations

have gone, passed into the far world, and left him here their solitary spokesman—the one witness of the wonders that had birth among them. He remains here to check the vanity of the present, by his testimony to the past. Where would be all human experience without the Oldest Inhabitant? Yet, surely, we thought—in no way discouraged in our belief by the placid, gentle looks of the venerable man at the table—surely, the Oldest Inhabitant loves now and then to pass off a joke upon his ignorant juniors. Yes: antiquity likes a hoax, and often, by its officer, the Oldest Inhabitant, puts off a flam upon the unconscious and too confiding present. Such was our thought; and, in truth, it was, after, well justified by the practice of the white-haired sage at the board. No little boy ever loved apples better than the Oldest Inhabitant loved a joke. In his time, he had written much for the newspapers.

"You were talking, Master Cuttlefish," said the Hermit, addressing a villager about fifty years old—a man with a remarkably blithe look, and ready manner. "Let us interrupt no tale," cried He of Bellyfulle.

"I was about to tell a little pen-and-ink experience; an incident that happened to me in my days of goose-quill," said Cuttlefish; from which I guessed that the speaker had driven the dangerous trade of author.

"There is little in the story; only, indeed, this much, that it taught me to have some tolerance even for those of the very worst report."

"Call you that little?" cried the Hermit,—"why, 'tis one of the prime lessons of benignant man. Let us have the story. But say, is it not a little chilly to-night? Could we not bear some heat, eh?" Whereupon, all called for a fire. The Oldest Inhabitant rang a silver bell that stood upon the table; when, instantly, a face that—in short, one of those faces that coming suddenly upon startled man, fairly make him gasp at their alarming beauty—looked in at the door. "Sweet-lips," said the Hermit, "a fire." The girl nodded and

again closed the door ; but ere we could recover ourselves she again entered the room, carrying a small faggot of cinnamon, which she laid upon the hearth, and stooped to arrange some logs for kindling. Think her thus occupied, whilst with dull, pale ink, we vainly try to draw her beauty. Sweetlips—for such in Clovernook was her name—had in her time been Maid of Honour at the English court : she was still unmarried, and it was said, had renounced the outside world, and become maid at the Gratis, for the pure love of independence. Now, then, for her face. (The pen shakes in our hand, as though conscious of the hopeless task wherein we would employ it.) Her face was beautifully fair—perfectly regular. It was a dream of a rapt sculptor, incarnate and living. Talk of music, the face seemed to breathe nothing but harmonious sprightly thoughts. Her pretty forehead was a tablet that seemed consecrated from the mark of age ; no, time, with his sacrilegious pen, should never mark one black line there. It was living ivory, defying wrinkles. Her lips ! we almost faint, putting down the monosyllable—her lips, scarlet as blood, seemed pouting with unconscious wealth. Her eyes were of dark, heart-devouring hazel ; with now a little love in them glancing timidly about, and now a merry little devil. Her hair—if it was hair—came bright and smoothly as light about her temples, and hung in lustrous curls at her neck. Then her form ! What swelling ripeness ! Her waist—we could see it ; even the arm of the Oldest Inhabitant appeared for a moment as it would move towards it ; her step seemed to strike music from the ground,—and then her foot !—what man, with the heart of man, would not have made that heart its cushion ? Her voice, too ! She spoke but three words, and for the next half-hour we were listening to some delicious music. Her dress was of the prettiest, quaintest fashion. She wore a white lawn boddice, laced with silken lace before ; her gown was of dove colour ; and her snow-white apron was curiously worked with fruits

and flowers around the border; needle never wrought such delicate similitudes.

"Sweetlips," said the Hermit, "to-night I'll take my tankard." Whereupon the girl brought a large silver vessel of wonderful workmanship, and with an eloquent smile placed it before the Sage of Bellyfulle. He, with an affection almost fatherly, patted her on her cheek, and in his cordial voice wished that, die when she would, it might be with a wedding-ring upon her finger. "And now," said the Hermit, turning to Cuttlefish, "tell your story."

"There is but little story in the matter," said Cuttlefish; "it is nothing more than an incident of my goose-quill days."

"Begin," cried the Hermit of Bellyfulle; and immediately the speaker obeyed.

"It had been my ill fortune to be called a genius by my discriminating parents, who, hugging themselves in the possession of such a treasure, would constantly remark that I did nothing like any other boy. No matter what was the mischief, to their satisfaction I always contrived to give it an original turn that mightily recommended the misdoing. My brothers were dull, stupid fellows, who—I have heard my father declare it twenty times—would never make a figure in the world. No; it would be to me—his youngest and only hope—that the name of Cuttlefish would owe a lasting lustre. And this belief was as a religion to my poor mother. Dear soul! she once visited Westminster Abbey. She had not been five minutes in Poets' Corner, before she burst into tears, and was compelled to quit the place At the earnest entreaties of my father, she, after a time, confessed the cause of her emotion. She could not, she said, look at the statues of the great people about her, without feeling that her dear Jacky—myself—would one day stand among 'em. She couldn't help, she said, the feelings of a mother; and they had been too much for her."

"Poor soul!" cried the Hermit. "It is something, to be sure, to the small pride of fleshly man to think of standing in an attitude of eternal marble for all comers of all generations; and yet the halfpence taken for the show do somewhat jingle a discordance. They bring the dead philosopher of the Abbey down to the living Spotted Boy of the caravan. 'Tis making Madam Fame the money-taker at a threepenny show. Perhaps," added the Hermit, with a smile, "'twas this thought that touched your mother into tears. Women jump like cats to conclusions; and the poor soul might have been shocked at the prospect of the copper fee."

"She might," said Cuttlefish, "I cannot say. It may, however, be some comfort to her spirit to know that I shall certainly escape the degradation. However, with this belief, that I should irradiate the name of Cuttlefish, my parents let me follow my own will, which, at a very early age, developed itself towards doing nothing. And, indeed, throughout my life, that, my first bent, has ever directed me. My brothers, who were so very stupid, and therefore fit for nothing, were early placed in the world, and indicated the truth of the parental opinion, by making their fortunes. They were dull blockheads, according to my father, and so became men of wealth and influence by the very force of their insensibility. Now I, who was brimful of genius, was to do everything by some extraordinary *hocus-pocus* dreamt of by my parents, but of which I, indeed, had not the remotest knowledge. 'Leave Jack alone,' would still be my father's cry, 'he 'll make his way in the world—how can it be otherwise? he has such wit!' Well, after spending my little patrimony—and in its happy mode of outlay I may be permitted to observe I showed a genius for ten thousand a year—and after losing some twelvemonth or two at bo-peep with bailiffs, you will judge of my destitution when I tell you that I found myself reduced to pen and ink. Oh, my friends! there is a condition for the human animal. Consider the

outcast. The maker of matches has a business; nay, he is the possessor of a mystery. When he has made his matches, there they are—tangible wood and brimstone; their merits open to the eye of cook and housemaid. Conscious of the excellence of his ware, the match-maker may higgle gallantly for his price; matches are things wanted in the commerce of life; it is no difficult task to recommend their utility to the world, alive as it is to the worth of firelight. But books! their worth is a matter of fancy, say of weakness, to the weaker part of mankind; they have no standard value, none, at their birth. Hence, the unknown maker of a book—I speak especially of the time when I first sinned in ink—is a sort of gipsy in the social scale; a picturesque vagabond, who somehow or the other contrives to live on the sunny side of the statutes, but is nevertheless vehemently suspected of all sorts of larceny by respectable householders. Shall I ever forget the uneasiness, the look of distrust from my landlady, when first the alarming truth fell upon her, that her three-pair room sheltered an author—or rather, an author in the shell, for as then I had hatched nothing, but was only sitting upon foolscap? Good soul! in a flutter of concern, she told me that that very room had been tenanted, for three long years, by an honest journeyman tailor, whose rent was regular as the Saturday. She looked at me from head to heel, and said she hoped that all was right; though I could perceive that she spoke in the very forlornness of the feeling. And after all, the woman had truth upon her side. Her tenant tailor had an allowed business; was a recognised necessity by fallen man; was moreover one of a worshipful guild; an artificer whose cunning administered to human pride; whose handiwork was all-in-all to worldly triumphs. For instance, what would be a coronation without a tailor? What would be man, left to nothing more than sheepskins and parrots' plumes? Hence, the woman, in her strong sense of the decencies of life, acknowledged the vital use of the labourer of the

needle ; hence, when she learnt that I only dealt in pen and ink, she looked upon me as a sort of vagabond conjuror ; a white wizard, whose very money—if ever she saw it—might be of doubtful origin. Shillings got out of an inkstand, she could hardly look upon as good mint coin : and for this reason, she could not comprehend how any man, by mere pen, ink, and paper, could give value received for the ready cash. Now the tailor's work was plain : a pair of breeches was a tangible thing ; and spoke as it were common sense to the common sense of man and womankind. But authorship ! Alas, how small to the breeches was a tale in verse !"

"Right, very right," said the Oldest Inhabitant. "I can remember in the days of my youth that people who dealt in pen and ink were made to live in a quarter of the city by themselves, for fear the rest of the inhabitants should catch their disorder. They were set apart, like folks in a fever. And it was good policy, that—very good. Notwithstanding, the disease would now and then spread. Indeed, a few foolish people went so far as to say that some babies were born with it." And here the Oldest Inhabitant gave a soft, flute-like chuckle, and then was silent.

"There I was, the born genius, as my begetters had averred," said Cuttlefish, "with wit enough to turn the world, destitute, penniless. Can I cease to remember the blank, hopeless look, with which, for an hour and more, I sat for the first time gazing at the blank paper! Then I rose from my wooden chair, and approached my chamber-window. I looked down into the street. There were coaches, and waggons, and drays, and carts—a thousand passing evidences of wealth and commerce. They all belong to somebody, said I. There—I would fancy—goes a physician in his carriage to sell Latin promises of health. There, the merchant to his counting-house; there, the lawyer to his office ; there, too, a fellow cries rabbits ; and there, at yonder corner, sits an old woman vending pippins. Look where I will, I see no one who has not

a wherewithal—a something to trade upon: real chattels, speaking to the dullest sense. And my stock in trade, thought I, with a despairing fall of the heart, is words; mere syllables. Alas! in the humility of my soul, I would have exchanged my richest stock for the slippers hawked by an old Levite past my door. Man can understand the worth of shoe-leather, when the best written foolscap shall be to him as waste-paper. Humbled by these thoughts, I returned to my chair; and again gazing on the barren sheet, groaned with sorrow that I had been born the genius of my house. How I chided fate that had not made me like my brothers, dull fellows—fools!"

"Come to your story," said the Hermit, impatiently appealing to his tankard. "What were the first doings of your maiden quill?"

"You shall hear," said Cuttlefish. "I know not how long I sat with my skull clasped by my hands; trying with all my might to conjure my brains. However, I was at length aroused by a sharp knuckle rap at my door; which then opened, and a gentleman—as he appeared to me—of great dignity of manner, entered the room. Pray, sir, I asked with growing confidence, for I saw the man could not be a bailiff, 'To whom do I owe the honour of this visit?'"

"'As for my name, sir,' replied the stranger, with a melancholy smile, 'you know it well, though at present we will speak no further of it. You deal in pen and ink. I have a little job for you.' Saying this, the stranger laid aside his cloak, and displayed a very beautiful court-suit of black. His ruffles and cravat were of the most superb lace; and his finger bore a diamond, which shone like a little sun in the room, drawing my eye with it wherever it moved. He was in every respect most richly appointed, yet was there nothing in his bravery of the coxcomb. He must be a cabinet-minister was my first belief; and then I thought, perhaps, a quack doctor."

"Did you not ask his name?" inquired the Hermit.

"Yes," answered Cuttlefish; "but his first reply was

only a smile, and a gentle shake of the head. Then he said, 'Oh! never mind my name—you have heard of me, who shall say how many times?' Then he drew himself a chair, and took a seat by the fire, which, for lack of fuel, was fast dying in the grate. Seeing this, he took the ruin of a poker, for it was no more, in his hand, and asking, with the blandest smile—'Will you allow me?' thrust it among the dying cinders. Instantaneously they blazed up, casting a brilliant light throughout the room. 'Bless me,' I cried, 'I thought the fire was out.' Whereupon the stranger, with the same sweet, yet strange smile, briefly remarked—'Nothing like poking!' Then my visitor again looked melancholy—again was silent. At length, I observed—'You said, Sir, something about a job: of what character? A piece of large history—or merely a little bit of private scandal?'

"'Not that—not that,' said the stranger, with slight emotion. 'I have suffered too much from the scandal of the world; have too keenly felt its wickedness to inflict it even upon a beggar. The truth is, I came here to hire you to pen my defence.'

"'Alas, Sir!' I cried, 'what have you done?' The stranger merely shook his head, and drew a deep, deep sigh. 'With what are you charged?' I demanded.

"'With everything,' answered my visitor; 'that is, with everything which the world calls wicked.'

"At these words, I leapt from my chair.

"'But, Sir,' said the stranger, taking a handkerchief from his pocket, and passing it gently across his eyes, 'but, Sir, though I do not wish to pass myself off as a pattern person, I am nevertheless cruelly slandered. Look here, Sir,' and to my astonishment, my visitor drew a large folio from his coat-pocket. 'Be good enough to run your eye along that passage.'

"I did so, and read as follows. '*Whereupon the old woman, upon being questioned, confessed that the devil had appeared to her in the shape of a black cat; that he promised her power over all things; and upon such pro-*

mise, she became a witch. This happened at eleven at night, on the 24th of October, in the year ——.'

"'Now, Sir,' said the stranger, 'I am prepared to show the falsehood of every syllable of the old woman's story.'

"'*You* prove?' I cried; and then it immediately came into my mind that the unhappy gentleman was lunatic; and that it was his peculiar disorder—dreadful malady!—to believe himself no other than the Wicked One. Or, perhaps, thought I, he may be some poor hypochondriacal creature, who *will* be Beelzebub, and nobody else. I have heard of folks thinking themselves into tea-pots—of insisting upon lowering themselves to mean and base vessels; with this man, the disease may have worked ambitiously. Hence, poor creature! he may be a demon in his own conceit; and for a time, it may be humane to humour him. 'Then, Sir,' I said to my visitor, 'there is no truth in the old gentlewoman's story? You were not bargaining with the witch on the night of——'

"'I can prove an alibi,' cried the stranger, with some vehemence. 'On that very night, I was closeted with a certain minister of state, whose name, by the way, I must beg leave to suppress—making a bargain between him and a noble duke, for a vacant garter. And yet, Sir, you must remark the grossness of the libel. It is therein written that I appeared as a black cat; that I visited a wretched old crone in a miserable, degrading disguise, as though ashamed of myself. Infamous scandal, Sir! I tell you, at that very time I was in my own person talking to one of the first men of the land; to a man of wealth and education; to one who had taken all sorts of honours at college; to one whose eloquence would lead away senates captive; whose keen logic would split hairs as a bill-hook would split logs. It was with him, Sir—with him, the noble and enlightened—that I was chatting the whole of the night; and yet it is set down in that folio that I was wasting precious time, and forget-

ting what was due to myself—by masquerading it with some mumpish harridan as a black cat. Upon my word,' said the stranger, with a look of injury—'if men affect to despise my principles, they might respect my taste. The truth is, they commit all sorts of shameful deeds, and then lay the temptation upon my shoulders. Be it murder, or be it robbery of a hen-roost, I am called the wicked instigator of the enormity; when the assassin and the thief had nobody but themselves to thank for the evil doing. It is, Sir, upon this point that I wish the aid of your pen to set me right with the world.'

"It is clear, thought I, the man is mad. Poor fellow! But I'll hear his story out.

"'Look here, Sir,' said he, and again he dived into his coat pocket; again he pulled forth another large folio. 'Read this,' he said.

"Obediently, I took the volume, and read the passage to which the stranger's finger pointed; it ran thus—'Furthermore it was a common report that when any gentleman or lord came to see the Lord of Orne, they were entertained (as they thought) very honourably, being served with all sorts of dainty fare and exquisite dishes, as if he had not spared to make them the best cheer that might be. But at their departure they that thought themselves well refreshed found their stomachs empty, and almost pined for want of food, having neither eaten nor drank anything, save in imagination only; and it is to be thought that their horses fared no better than their masters. It happened one day that a certain lord being departed from his house, one of his men having left something behind, returned to the castle, and entering suddenly into the hall where they dined a little before, he espied a monkey beating very sorely the master of the house that had feasted them of late! And there be others that say that he hath been seen through the chink of a door, lying on a table upon his belly, and a monkey scourging him very strangely; to whom he should say,—Let me alone,—let me alone; wilt thou always torment me thus?'

"'Now, Sir,' said the stranger, with a piteous look, 'you at once apprehend the monkey—you know for whom *he* is intended?'

"'It is no difficult matter to guess,' said I.

"'Upon my honour,' said the stranger, rising from his seat, and speaking with difficulty from emotion, 'upon my honour, whatever may have been the parts I have acted, I never yet appeared as a monkey; never, Sir; the accusation is only one of the ten thousand falsehoods concerning me that men have invented to disguise the wicked deeds of their own free spirits. I ask, wherefore monkey? What should I have gained by so base, so low a disguise? Besides, why should I have taken the trouble to visit the Lord of Orne? Would it not have been more reasonable to wait till his lordship came to me?'

"Poor fellow! again I thought—he is very mad indeed!

"'Look here, again, Sir,' said the stranger, and he took another, a smaller book, from his pocket. 'Read here: more scandal.'

"Taking the volume from his hand, I read as follows: 'There was a conjuror at Salzburg, that vaunted that he could gather all the serpents within half a mile round about into a ditch, and feed them and bring them up there; and being about the experiment, behold the old and grand serpent came in the while, which whilst the conjuror thought by the force of his charms to make it enter the ditch among the rest, he set upon and inclosed him round about like a girdle so strongly, that he drew the conjuror into the ditch with him, where he miserably died.'

"'The fellow's foot slipped,' said the stranger. 'May I die for ever if I had any hand in it—and then for the story of the serpent—but never mind; please to look at this.' With this the stranger took another folio from his pocket. Opening it upon the table, he pointed to a paragraph, and in the mildest voice, said '*Lege*.' I obeyed.

"'It was, in truth, a very lamentable spectacle that

happened to the governor of Macon, a magician, whom the Devil snatched up in dinner-while, and hoisted aloft, carrying him three times about the town of Macon in the presence of many beholders, to whom he cried in this manner—Help! help! my friends! so that the whole town stood amazed thereat. Yea, and the remembrance of this strange accident sticketh at this day fast in the minds of all the inhabitants of the country; and they say that this wretch, having given himself to the Devil, provided himself with store of holy bread, which he always carried about with him, thinking thereby to cheat him; but, in truth, it served him in no stead, as his end declared.'

"'What think you of that?' asked the stranger. 'Do you mark the folly, the useless labour they put upon me? Why should I have taken the trouble of carrying the governor three times about the town, when I had but to wait patiently for him—to bide my time, as you worldly people say, and he *must* have found me? Besides, what an ass does the scandal-monger make me! Is it likely that I should so forget my own interest as to make so public an example of my victim? Was that the way, think you, to draw other folks in? But there, there is the blundering of the chroniclers. Now, they call me all sorts of names to show my cunning; and now they make me do tricks that would disgrace a fool. Why can't they be consistent?'

"Yes; the poor man is certainly mad, again and again I said to myself; though, to confess the truth, when I saw him dive his hands into his pockets, and draw from them huge folios, I did, despite of myself, feel a strange fear—a creeping terror.

"'Read here!' he cried; 'tis, I know, a well-known story; yet read it, that I may, as your law-makers have it, explain.'

"Obediently I read.

"'Cornelius Agrippa, a great student in magic, and a man both famous by his own works and others' report,

for his necromancy, went always accompanied with the Devil in the similitude of a black dog. But when his time of death drew near, and he was urged to repentance, he took off the enchanted collar from the dog's neck, and sent him away with these terms,—*Get thee hence, thou cursed beast, which hast utterly destroyed me.* And the dog was never after seen.'

"'What think you of that?' asked the stranger, with a slight sneer. 'Why there never was a greater flam. I knew Cornelius Agrippa very well.'

"'Indeed!' I cried, with increasing uneasiness, which nevertheless I endeavoured to conceal. 'What sort of a man may he have been?'

"'An excellent person; and for his dog—poor, faithful creature, it was the very fidelity of the animal that made him suspected by the hard-judging world: it was his very excellence that drew the scandal down upon him. The dog was incorruptible, and therefore, said men, the Devil was in him.'

"And you knew Cornelius Agrippa?' I ventured again to ask.

"'That is,' answered the stranger, 'I wanted to know him. I knew his worldly miseries; I knew the contempt and lies that were visited upon him. I knew him an outcast from his fellows, spurned, hated by them; yet with a stout and constant spirit working for the lasting delights of those who persecuted him. I knew all this; and then, indeed, I tempted him, as I have tempted others of his tribe, with ease, with wealth, with all the sounding, hollow music of the world; but Cornelius laughed at me and my promises; took his staff, whistled to his dog, and trudged securely about the world, though at every footstep its dwellers would have stoned him. To be sure I had this delight. I found that his dog had brought a bad name upon his master: that was something.'

"'Poor Cornelius!' cried I.

"'Nay,' said the stranger, 'not for the evil that it

did to Cornelius, but to those who reviled and hunted him. Do you not see—I *know* the truth—that the malice garnered in the souls of the persecutors is of more worth to me than the suffering of the persecuted? On one hand, I have wickedness and folly working in ten thousand hearts—that is sin by wholesale. Think you, when the martyr roasts at the stake, that it is his pains I delight in? No: it is the rejoicing of the men who have doomed him to the fate; it is the ferocious happiness of the multitude that makes my delight—it is—'

"I started from the stranger, who, recalled to himself by my agitation, mildly said—'To return to Cornelius Agrippa. To the last he rejected my friendship; and though it has passed from mouth to mouth among men that he and I did business together, it is not the truth. With his stout heart he spurned me; and so, I confess it, out of pure spite, I contrived to fasten a bad name upon his black dog.'

"'Poor malice, indeed,' I cried.

"'Why, yes,' said the stranger; 'but it has served its purpose; and, happily for my interest, there are few men—I mean the men in advance of the millions—who, by the beautiful falsehood of the world, have not all of them been charged with black dogs of some sort.' Saying this, the stranger lightly laughed.

"'And now, Sir, may I ask your precise business with me?' I asked, all the while feeling that I was closeted with a madman; though at the same time not unvisited by strange thoughts, which, however thick and fast they came, I strove to master.

"'Have patience,' said the stranger, 'let me first supply you with your materials.'

"Hereupon the stranger, fast as he could, dipped both hands into his pockets, drawing therefrom folios, quartos—in truth, books of all dimensions, dropping them upon the ground, fast as hail-stones. As volume after volume fell, my blood became colder and colder, my hair

stood up like wire; I sat in my chair motionless as though caught in a trap. With every moment I became more and more assured that I was giving audience to something supernatural, if not to the great fiend himself. In my confused horror, I asked myself, is he a doomed bookseller?—and then there was a remarkable intelligence in his face that gave no warranty of such a belief. At length, he seemed to have emptied his pockets, and stood up to the shoulders amid a heap of volumes.

"At last, I was able to stammer, 'And do all those books contain something about you?'

"'All; and ten thousand thousand more,' answered the fiend, for it was he, indeed. 'It has still been the trick, the injustice of man, to shuffle off the rascalities of his nature upon my shoulders. For thousands of years have I borne this injustice; but I will no longer endure with meekness the sins that really and truly belong to man himself. I will no longer be made the stupid blundering hero of his fireside tales; no longer be turned into all shapes, foolish, base, and contemptible, to excuse his ends. No: though, to confess it, I hate printer's ink as I hate the glory of the sun, nevertheless I will, I must, fight man with his own dirty missiles; and will, therefore, print a book. It is, I am aware, a miserable strait to be reduced to,—a condition I little dreamt of when I was wont to dodge John Gutenburg about the streets of Mentz, and now and then stand beneath his eaves, listing the first creakings of his virgin press. I little thought that I should be brought to this pass; but so it is: my best weapon is now a fine, bold type. I have chosen you'—and here the fiend gave the nod of a patron—'to do my work.'

"With much labour did I assure the fiend, that I was wholly unworthy of the distinction. 'Why not take the job to some experienced quill?'

"'No,' answered the fiend, 'I would rather intrust myself to your simplicity. You are yet obscure, unknown;

and will for a time be docile: I say for a time, for when the book shall have won you a reputation, you will be as insolent and as unmanageable as the rest of them. How many authors have I in my time set up! and how shamefully have they rewarded me!' Here the fiend ran over a bead-roll of names from Faustus to——but no matter, making out a strong case of thanklessness against one and all of them. 'Now you,' he said, 'will, I doubt not, finish what I want before you are quite spoiled. Here, as I said,' and he looked at the mountain of volumes, 'are a few of your materials. I will, as you proceed, bring you more.'

"I shuddered as I glanced at the crushing heap of books. 'A few of the materials!' I cried; 'why, 'twill take me a life to go through them; for, to say the truth, I am a slow reader.'

"'You 'll find the labour nothing,' said the fiend, 'for I have doubled down the leaves at all the strong bits of scandal, and have pencilled my refutation in the margin. All that will be wanted from you, will be to put the matter into nice clear English, fit even for families. I could do it myself, but truly, I am not confident as to the purity of my language. I know something of all tongues, to be sure, quite well enough to speak; but not, I fear, to write. I was once very well skilled in the dead tongues, but, for want of practice, I feel myself now and then at fault in them. My Coptic is quite gone; but I have contrived to keep up my Hebrew talking with the stock-jobbers and money-lenders.'

"'And pray,' I ventured to ask, 'what is your favourite language of all the modern?'

"'I talk a great deal of French; indeed, without vanity, I may say it—I think I have the true Parisian accent. Not that I have had cause to neglect my English—oh, dear no; I talk much English, and let me tell you, to some of the very highest people. I know, the prejudice runs that I delight in low company; that my especial haunts are alleys, cellars, filthy places that

even make me stop my nose to think of them. Having an interest in all human life, I certainly do at times visit such places, but I am just as often—nay, oftener—to be found in boudoirs, in statesmen's closets, and royal drawing-rooms. But to business. You will immediately get on with your work,' and the fiend pointed to the work.

"'Upon my soul,' I cried with vehemence, 'I had rather you took it somewhere else; I shall make nothing of it; you'll only suffer in my hands.'

"'But, look here,' said the fiend; and opening a volume where a leaf was turned, he read as follows:—'The poor child, possessed by the Devil, vomited nothing but bits of glass, crooked pins, and died at midnight.' 'Observe my note upon this,' said the fiend. At the very time I am set down as doing this mischief upon some babe or suckling, I was—here I have written it—supping with Pope Leo the Tenth. And so throughout. You will find that my defence consists in a round of *alibis*. You will find—and it is in such spirit that I wish you to enforce the lesson—that what men falsely, fraudfully, foolishly call the instigation of the Devil, the temptation of the Devil, the prompting of the Devil, the work of the Devil, is no other than the antics of their own stupid, stubborn, headlong passion. It is thus the repentant pickpocket vows that it was I who crooked his finger for the theft—the murderer swears 'twas I who gave him his weapon—the adulterer, that 'twas I who burned in his veins, and made him spirit off his neighbour's wife. All lies, all wilful hypocrisy, fathered upon me, who am determined to put up with the calumny no longer; and for this reason, I shall be just as sure of those who do a wrong as if I bore the shame of tempting them to the iniquity. I shall have them still, with the proper credit of their coming to me unpressed, uninvited. Therefore, you will immediately from these and from the other books I will bring you, write my defence.'

"'Will you have it in a folio?' I faintingly asked.

"'Certainly not,' said the fiend; 'a small pocket book for my money. Let me see; properly condensed 'twill make two nice volumes. I shall pay you handsomely. I will give you a hundred guineas for the work.'"

"And pray," asked the Hermit of Bellyfulle, "did you ever write the book?"

"Never," said Cuttlefish with emphasis, "never wrote a single line."

"And why not?" inquired the sage.

"Because, would you believe it," cried Cuttlefish with a roaring laugh, "because the Devil was ass enough to pay me fifty guineas for the work in advance."

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But the meetings at the "Gratis" are no more. The hostelry itself is closed, found to be unlicensed by the prim propriety of the world. The Hermit has wandered we know not whither. Now and then his wise, happy, cordial spirit seems to visit knots of men gathered together, to sit the sometime jurymen upon the faults and follies of the earth; when he asserts the influence of his benevolent soul in the broad charity of the verdict. Yes; we must hug the belief that the Hermit is still a pilgrim among men, though, like some kaiser out upon a holiday, he travels unknown.

And Clovernook? It is gone; wiped out of the map of the earth. Even as some scene, bright with the hues of the land of dreams, the wonder-work of the golden-handed Clarksonius Stanfieldius,—is blanked and blotted out, that its whitened web may bear, it may be, a cold lodging-house or a colder prison,—so is Clovernook but a place that was; a hamlet wherein

fancy has loitered away a truant hour; loitered, to be called back to the hard bricks and mortar that carry rent-charge; to the real world gaol locked and grated by Mulciber Convention. A gaol wherein man, with his nose at the bars, *will* nevertheless see some sort of Clovernook beyond. No unjust sentence; no keeper Fortune, no turnkey Circumstance can blind his brain to that fancy land. He will enjoy it: it is the heritage of the imperial soul of man: and therefore—though a thing of dreams—far more enduring than the stones of Babylon.

ESSAYS.

THE FOLLY OF THE SWORD.

May we ask the reader to behold with us a melancholy show—a saddening, miserable spectacle? We will not take him to a prison, a workhouse, a Bedlam, where human nature expiates its guiltiness, its lack of worldly goods, its most desolate perplexity; but we will take him to a wretchedness, first contrived by wrong, and perpetuated by folly. We will show him the embryo mischief that, in due season, shall be born in the completeness of its terror, and shall be christened with a sounding name, Folly and Wickedness standing sponsors.

We are in St. James's Park. The royal standard of England burns in the summer air—the queen is in London. We pass the palace, and in a few paces are in Birdcage Walk. There, reader, is the miserable show we promised you. There are some fifty recruits, drilled by a sergeant to do homicide cleanly, handsomely. In Birdcage Walk, Glory sits upon her eggs, and hatches eagles!

How very beautiful is the sky above us! What a blessing comes with the fresh, quick air! The trees, drawing their green beauty from the earth, quicken our thoughts of the bounteousness of this teeming world.

Here, in this nook, this patch, where we yet feel the vibrations of surrounding London—even here, Nature, constant in her beauty, blooms and smiles, uplifting the heart of man, if the heart be his to own her.

Now look aside, and contemplate God's image with a musket. Your bosom still expanding with gratitude to Nature, for the blessings she has heaped about you, behold the crowning glory of God's work managed like a machine, to slay the image of God—to stain the teeming earth with homicidal blood—to fill the air with howling anguish! Is not yonder row of clowns a melancholy sight? Yet are they the sucklings of Glory—the baby mighty ones of a future Gazette. Reason beholds them with a deep pity. Imagination magnifies them into fiends of wickedness. There is carnage about them—carnage, and the pestilential vapours of the slaughtered. What a fine-looking thing is war! Yet, dress it as we may, dress and feather it, daub it with gold, huzza it, and sing swaggering songs about it—what is it, nine times out of ten, but Murder in uniform? Cain, taken the sergeant's shilling?

And now we hear the fifes and drums of her Majesty's grenadiers. They pass on the other side; and a crowd of idlers, their hearts jumping to the music, their eyes dazzled, and their feelings perverted, hang about the march, and catch the infection—the love of glory! And true wisdom thinks of the world's age, and sighs at its slow advance in all that really dignifies man, the truest dignity being the truest love for his fellow. And then hope and a faith in human progress contemplate the pageant, its real ghastliness disguised by outward glare and frippery, and know the day will come when the symbols of war will be as the sacred beasts of old Egypt—things to mark the barbarism of by-gone war; melancholy records of the past perversity of human nature.

We can imagine the deep-chested laughter—the look of scorn that would annihilate, and then the small com-

passion—of the Man of War, at this, the dream of folly, or the wanderings of an inflamed brain. Yet, oh, man of war! at this very moment are you shrinking, withering, like an aged giant. The fingers of Opinion have been busy at your plumes—you are not the feathered thing you were; and then that little tube, the goose-quill, has sent its silent shots into your huge anatomy; and the corroding INK, even whilst you look at it and think it shines so brightly, is eating with a tooth of rust into your sword.

That a man should kill a man, and rejoice in the deed—nay gather glory from it—is the act of the wild animal. The force of muscle and dexterity of limb, which make the wild man a conqueror, are deemed in savage life man's highest attributes. The creature, whom in the pride of our Christianity we call heathen and spiritually desolate, has some personal feeling in the strife—he kills his enemy, and then, making an oven of hot stones, bakes his dead body, and, for crowning satisfaction, eats it. His enemy becomes a part of him; his glory is turned to nutriment; and he is content. What barbarism! Field-marshals sicken at the horror; nay, troopers shudder at the tale, like a fine lady at a toad.

In what, then, consists the prime evil? In the murder, or the meal? Which is the most hideous deed—to kill a man, or to cook and eat the man when killed?

But softly, there is no murder in the case. The craft of man has made a splendid ceremony of homicide—has invested it with dignity. He slaughters with flags flying, drums beating, trumpets braying. He kills according to method, and has worldly honours for his grim handiwork. He does not, like the unchristian savage, carry away with him mortal trophies from the skulls of his enemies. No; the alchemy or magic of authority turns his well-won scalps into epaulets, or hangs them in stars and crosses at his button-hole; and then, the battle over—the dead not eaten, but carefully buried—and the maimed

and mangled howling and blaspheming in hospitals—the meek Christian warrior marches to church, and reverently folding his sweet and spotless hands, sings *Te Deum*. Angels waft his fervent thanks to God, to whose footstool—on the man's own faith—he has so lately sent his shuddering thousands. And this spirit of destruction working within him is canonized by the craft and ignorance of man, and worshipped as glory!

And this religion of the sword—this dazzling heathenism, that makes a pomp of wickedness—seizes and distracts us, even on the threshold of life. Swords and drums are our baby playthings; the types of violence and destruction are made the pretty pastime of our childhood; and as we grow older, the outward magnificence of the ogre Glory—his trappings and his trumpets, his privileges, and the songs that are shouted in his praise—ensnare the bigger baby to his sacrifice. Hence, slaughter becomes an exalted profession; the marked, distinguished employment of what, in the jargon of the world, is called a gentleman.

But for this craft operating upon this ignorance, who—in the name of outraged God—would become the hireling of the Sword? Hodge, poor fellow, enlists. He wants work; or he is idle, dissolute. Kept, by the injustice of the world, as ignorant as the farm-yard swine, he is the better instrument for the world's craft. His ear is tickled with the fife and drum; or he is drunk; or the sergeant—the lying valet of glory—tells a good tale, and already Hodge is a warrior in the rough. In a fortnight's time you may see him at Chatham; or, indeed, he was one of those we marked in Birdcage Walk. Day by day, the sergeant works at the block ploughman, and chipping and chipping, at length carves out a true, handsome soldier of the line. What knew Hodge of the responsibility of man? What dreams had he of the self-accountability of the human spirit? He is become the lackey of carnage, the liveried footman, at a few pence per day, of fire and blood. The musket-

stock, which for many an hour he hugs—hugs in sulks and weariness—was no more a party to its present use, than was Hodge. That piece of walnut is the fragment of a tree which might have given shade and fruit for another century; homely, rustic people gathering under it. Now, it is the instrument of wrong and violence; the working tool of slaughter. Tree and man, are not their destinies as one?

And is Hodge alone of benighted mind? Is he alone deficient of that knowledge of moral right and wrong which really and truly crowns the man, king of himself? When he surrenders up his nature, a mere machine with human pulses, to do the bidding of war, has he taken counsel with his own reflection—does he know the limit of the sacrifice? He has taken the shilling, and he knows the facings of his uniform.

When the born and bred gentleman, to keep to coined and current terms, pays down his thousand pounds or so, for his commission, what incites to the purchase? It may be the elegant idleness of the calling; it may be the bullion and glitter of the regimentals; or, devout worshipper! it may be an unquenchable thirst for glory. From the moment that his name stars the Gazette, what does he become? The bond-servant of war. Instantly, he ceases to be a judge between moral right and moral injury. It is his duty not to think, but to obey. He has given up, surrendered to another, the freedom of his soul: he has dethroned the majesty of his own will. He must be active in wrong, and see not the injustice: shed blood for craft and usurpation, calling bloodshed valour. He may be made, by the iniquity of those who use him, the burglar and the brigand; but glory calls him pretty names for his prowess, and the wicked weakness of the world shouts and acknowledges them. And is this the true condition of reasonable man? Is it by such means that he best vindicates the greatness of his mission here? Is he, when he most gives up the free motions of his own soul—is he then most glorious?

A few months ago, chance shewed us a band of ruffians, who, as it afterwards appeared, were intent upon most desperate mischief. They spread themselves over the country, attacking, robbing, and murdering all who fell into their hands. Men, women, and children, all suffered alike. Nor were the villains satisfied with this. In their wanton ruthlessness, they set fire to cottages, and tore up and destroyed plantations. Every footpace of their march was marked with blood and desolation.

Who were these wretches?—you ask. What place did they ravage? Were they not caught, and punished?

They were a part of the army of Africa; valorous Frenchmen, bound for Algiers, to cut Arab throats; and in the name of glory, and for the everlasting honour of France, to burn, pillage, and despoil; and all for national honour—all for glory!

But Glory cannot dazzle Truth. Does it not at times appear no other than a highwayman, with a pistol at a nation's breast? A burglar, with a crow-bar, entering a kingdom. Alas! in this world there is no Old Bailey for nations. Otherwise, where would have been the crowned heads that divided Poland? Those felon monarchs, anointed to—steal? It is true, the historian claps the cut-purse conqueror in the dock, and he is tried by the jury of posterity. *He* is past the verdict, yet is not its damnatory voice lost upon generations. For thus is the world taught—albeit slowly taught—true glory; when that which passed for virtue is truly tested to be vile; when the hero is hauled from the car, and fixed for ever in the pillory.

But war brings forth the heroism of the soul: war tests the magnanimity of man. Sweet is the humanity that spares a fallen foe; gracious the compassion that tends his wounds, that brings even a cup of water to his burning lips. Granted. But is there not heroism of a grander mould?—The heroism of forbearance? Is not the humanity that refuses to strike, a nobler virtue than the late pity born of violence? Pretty is it to see the

victor with salve and lint kneeling at his bloody trophy—a maimed and agonized fellow-man,—but surely it had been better to withhold the blow, than to have been first mischievous, to be afterwards humane.

That nations, professing a belief in Christ, should couple glory with war, is monstrous blasphemy. Their faith, their professing faith, is—"love one another:" their practice is to—cut throats; and more, to bribe and hoodwink men to the wickedness, the trade of blood is magnified into a virtue. We pray against battle, and glorify the deeds of death. We say, beautiful are the ways of peace, and then cocker ourselves upon our perfect doings in the art of man-slaying. Let us then cease to pay the sacrifice of admiration to the demon—War; let us not acknowledge him as a mighty and majestic principle, but, at the very best, a grim and melancholy necessity.

But there always has been—there always will be, war. It is inevitable; it is a part of the condition of human society. Man has always made glory to himself from the destruction of his fellow, and so it will continue. It may be very pitiable; would it were otherwise! But so it is, and there is no helping it.

Happily, we are slowly killing this destructive fallacy. A long breathing-time of peace has been fatal to the dread magnificence of glory. Science and philosophy—*povera e nuda filosofia!*—have made good their claims, inducing man to believe that he may vindicate the divinity of his nature otherwise than by perpetrating destruction. He begins to think there is a better glory in the communication of triumphs of mind, than in the clash of steel and roar of artillery. At the present moment, a society, embracing men of distant nations—"natural enemies," as the old, wicked cant of the old patriotism had it—is at work, plucking the plumes from Glory, unbracing his armour, and divesting the ogre of all that dazzled foolish and unthinking men, showing the rascal

in his natural hideousness, in all his base deformity. Some, too, are calculating the cost of Glory's table: some showing what an appetite the demon has, devouring at a meal the substance of ten thousand sons of industry —yea, eating up the wealth of kingdoms. And thus, by degrees, are men beginning to look upon this god, Glory, as no more than a finely-trapped Sawney Bean,— a monster and a destroyer—a nuisance; a noisy lie.

ELIZABETH AND VICTORIA.

Every generation compared to the age it immediately succeeds, is but a further lapse from Paradise. Every grandfather is of necessity a wiser, kinder, nobler being than the grandson doomed to follow him—every grandmother chaster, gentler, more self-denying, more devoted to the beauty of goodness, than the giddy, vain, thoughtless creature, who in her time is sentenced to be grandmother to somebody, whose still increased defects will only serve to bring out the little lustre of the gentlewoman who preceded her. Man, undoubtedly, had at the first a fixed amount of goodness bestowed upon him; but this goodness, by being passed from generation to generation, has, like a very handsome piece of coin, with arms and legend in bold relief, become so worn by continual transit, that it demands the greatest activity of faith to believe that which is now current in the world, to be any portion of the identical goodness with which the human race was originally endowed. Hapless creatures are we! Moral paupers of the nineteenth century, turning a shining cheek upon one another, and by the potent force of swagger, passing off our thin, worn, illegible pieces of coin—how often, no thicker, no weightier than a spangle on a player's robe!—when our glorious ancestors, in the grandeur of their goodness, could ring down musical shekels! Nay, as we go back, we find the coin of excellence so heavy, so abounding, that how any man—Sampson perhaps excepted—had strength enough to carry his own virtues about him, puzzles the effeminacy of present thought. Folks then were doubtless made grave, majestic in their movements by the very weight of their excellence. Whilst we,

poor anatomies—skipjacks of the nineteenth century—we carry all our ready virtue in either corner of our waistcoat pocket, and from its very lightness, are unhappily enabled to act all sorts of unhallowed capers—to forget the true majesty of man in the antics of the mountebank. Forlorn degradation of the human race!

But the tears of the reader—for if he have a heart of flesh, it is by this time melting in his eyes—are not confidently demanded for only the one generation whereof (seeing he is our reader) he is certainly not the worst unit: but we here require of him to weep for posterity; yes, to subscribe a rivulet of tears for the generations to come. The coinage of the virtues at present in circulation among us is so thin, so defaced, so battered, so clipt, that it appears to us wholly impossible that any portion of the currency can descend a couple of generations lower. What, then, is to become of our grandchildren? Without one particle of golden truth and goodness left to them, for we cannot take into account the two or three pieces hoarded—as old ladies have hoarded silver pennies—what remains, what alternative for our descendants but to become a generation of coiners? Can any man withstand the terror of this picture, wherein all the world are shown as so many passers of pocket-pieces, lacquered over with something that seems like gold and silver, but which, indeed, is only seeming? A picture wherein he who is the ablest hypocrite—passing off the greatest amount of false coin upon his neighbour—shall appear the most virtuous person? Is not this an appalling scene to contemplate? Yet, if there be any truth in a common theory, if there be any veracity in the words written in a thousand pages, uttered at every fire-side, dropt in the casual meeting of man and man at door-steps, in by-lanes, highways, and market-places—the picture we have shadowed forth must become an iron present.

"We shall never see such times again!"

"The world isn't what it used to be."

"When I was a boy, things hadn't come to this pass."

"The world gets wickeder and wickeder."

Since the builders of Babel were scattered, these thoughts have been voiced in every tongue. From the very discontent and fantasticalness of his nature, man looks backward at the lost Paradise of another age. He affects to snuff the odour of its fruits and flowers, and with a melancholy shaking of the head, sees, or thinks he sees, the flashing of the fiery swords that guard them. And then, in the restlessness of his heart, in the peevishness and discontent of his soul, he says all sorts of bitter things of the generation he has fallen among; and, from the vanished glory of the past, predicts increasing darkness for the future. Happily, the prophesying cannot be true; and happily, too, for the condition of the prophet, he knows it will not. But then there is a sort of comfort in the waywardness of discontent; at times, a soothing music to the restlessness of the soul in the deep bass of hearty grumbling.

The ingratitude of the act is entirely forgotten in the pleasure. "Ha! those were the merry days—the golden times of England they were!" May not this be heard from the tradesman, the mechanic, as he is borne past Tilbury Fort, and the thoughts of Queen Elizabeth, of her "golden days," ring in his brain; and living only in the nineteenth century, he has some vague, perplexing notion that he has missed an Eden, only by a hundred years or two. He thinks not—why should he?—of the luxury he now purchases for a shilling; a luxury, not compassable in those golden days by all the power and wealth of all the combining sovereigns of the earth; for he is a passenger of a Gravesend steam-boat, the fare twelvepence.

We would not forget that wonder of Elizabeth's navy, the Great Harry. No; we would especially remember it, to compare the marvel, with all its terrors, to the agent of our day, which wrought and directed from a

few gallons of water, makes the winged ship but as a log —a dead leviathan upon the deep ; which, in the certainty and intensity of its power of destruction must, in the fulness of time, make blood-spilling war bankrupt, preaching peace with all men, even from "the cannon's mouth."

We are, however, a degenerate race. In our maudlin sensibility, we have taken under our protection the very brutes of the earth—the fowls of the air—the fish of the sea. We have cast the majesty of the law around the asses of the reign of Victoria—have assured to live geese a property in their own feathers—have, with a touch of tenderness, denounced the wood-plugged claws of the lobsters of Billingsgate. We have a society, whose motto, spiritually, is—

> "Never to link our pleasure or our pride
> With suffering of the meanest thing that lives."

Very different, indeed, was the spirit of the English people, when their good and gracious Queen Elizabeth smiled sweetly upon bull-dogs, and found national music in the growl, the roar, and the yell of a bear-garden; whereto, in all the courtesy of a nobler and more virtuous age, the sovereign led the French ambassador ; that, as chroniclers tell us, Monsieur might arrive at a sort of comparative knowledge of English bravery, judging the courage of the people by the stubborn daring of their dogs.

Then we had no Epsom, with its high moralities—no Ascot, with its splendour and wealth. Great, indeed, was the distance—deep the abyss—between the sovereign and the sovereign people.

And in those merry, golden days of good Queen Bess, rank was something ; it had its brave outside, and preached its high prerogative from externals. The nobleman declared his nobility by his cloak, doublet, and jerkin ; by the plumes in his hat ; by the jewels flashing in his shoes. Society, in all its gradations, was inexorably marked by the tailor and goldsmith.

But what is the tailor of the nineteenth century? What doth he for nobility? Alas! next to nothing. The gentleman is no longer the creature of the tailor's hands —the being of his shopboard. The gentleman must dress himself in ease, in affability, in the gentler and calmer courtesies of life, to make distinguishable the nobility of his nature from the homeliness, the vulgarity of the very man who, it may be, finds nobility in shoe-leather. Thus, gentility of blood, deprived by innovation of its external livery—denied the outward marks of supremacy—is thrown upon its bare self to make good its prerogative. Manner must now do the former duty of fine clothes.

State, too, was, in the blessed times of Elizabeth, a most majestic matter. The queen's carriage, unlike Victoria's, was a vehicle wondrous in the eyes of men as the chariot of King Pharoah. Now, does every poor man keep his coach—price sixpence! How does the economy of luxury vulgarize the indulgence!

Travelling was then a grave and serious adventure. The horse-litter was certainly a more dignified means of transit than the fuming, boiling, roaring steam-engine, that rushes forward with a man as though the human anatomy was no more than a woolpack. In the good old times of Queen Bess, a man might take his five long days and more for a hundred miles, putting up, after a week's jolting, at his hostelry, the Queen's Head of Islington, for one good night's rest, ere he should gird up his loins to enter London. Now, is man taught to lose all respect for the hoariness of time by the quickness of motion. Now, may he pass over two hundred miles in some seven or eight hours if he will, taking his first meal in the heart of Lancashire, and his good-night glass at a Geneva palace in London. Is it wonderful that our present days should abound more in sinful levity than the days of the good Queen Elizabeth, seeing that we may, in the same space of time, crowd so much more iniquity? The truth is, science has thrown so many

hours upon our hands, that we are compelled to kill them with all sorts of arrows—which, as moralists declare, have mortal poison at the barb, however gay and brilliant may be the feathers that carry it home. Dreadful will be the time when that subtle fiend, science, shall perform nearly all human drudgery; for then men in their very idleness will have nought else to destroy save their own souls; and the destruction will, of course, be quicker, and, to the father of all mischief, much more satisfactory.

Again, in the good times of Elizabeth, humanity was blessed with a modesty, a deference—in these days of bronze, to be vainly sought for—towards the awfulness of power, the grim majesty of authority. And if, indeed, it happened that some outrageous wretch, forgetful of the purpose of nature in creating him the Queen's liegeman, and therefore her property—if, for a moment, he should cease to remember the fealty which, by the principle of the divine right of kings, should be vital to him as the blood in his veins—why, was there not provided for him, by the benignity of custom and the law, a salutary remedy? If he advanced a new opinion, had he not ears wherewith, by hangman's surgery, he might be cured of such disease? If he took a mistaken view of the rights of his fellow-subjects, might he not be taught to consider them from a higher point of elevation, and so be instructed?

Booksellers, in the merry time of Elizabeth, were enabled to vindicate a higher claim to moral and physical daring than is permitted to them in these dull and drivelling days. He who published a book, questioning—though never so gently—the prerogative of her Majesty to do just as the spirit should move her, might have his right hand chopped off, and afterwards—there have been examples of such devotion—wave his bloody stump, with a loyal shout of "God save the Queen!" But these were merry days—golden days—in which the royal prerogative was more majestic, more awful, than in the

nineteenth century. And wherefore? The reason is plain as the Queen's arms.

The king of beasts lives on flesh. His carnivorousness is one of the great elements of his majesty. So was it in the times of Elizabeth, with the Queen's prerogative. It was for the most part fed upon flesh. It would be a curious, an instructive calculation, could we arrive at the precise number of noses, and arms, and hands, and human heads, and quarters of human carcases, which—during the merry, golden reign of Elizabeth, of those days we shall never see again—were required by law to keep strong and lusty the prerogative of the Virgin Queen! How, as the human head festered and rotted above the city gates, was the prerogative sweetened by the putrefaction! And then the daily lessons preached by the mute horror of the dead man's mouth, to the human life daily passing beneath it! What precepts of love and gentleness towards all men fell from the shrivelled lips—what christianity gleamed from the withered eye-balls! How admirably were the every-day thoughts of men associated with prerogative, its majesty for ever preached by dead men's tongues—its beauty visible in dead men's flesh. Those were the golden days—the merry days—we shall never see such times again. Now, a poor and frivolous race, we pass beneath Temple Bar, untaught by the grim moralities that from its height were wont to instruct our forefathers. In the days of Elizabeth, we might have lounged at the door of the city shopkeeper, and whilst chaffering for a commodity of this world, have had our thoughts elevated by a consideration of the ghastly skull—grinning a comment upon all earthly vanities—above us. Those days are gone—past for ever. We have now plate-glass and dainty painting, and precious woods, in the shops of our tradesmen, but nought to take us from the vanity of life—no prerogative of a Virgin Queen, in the useful semblance of a *memento mori*.

It is to the want of such stern yet wholesome monitors,

we are doubtless to attribute the decay of the national character. We are sunk in effeminacy; withered by the fond ministerings of science. The road of life—which, by its ruggedness, was wont to try the sinews of our Elizabethan ancestors—we, their degenerate children, have spread as with a carpet, and hung the walls around us with radiant tapestry. The veriest household drudge of our time is a Sardanapalus compared to the lackey of the Virgin Queen. The tatterdemalion who lives on highway alms may look down upon the beggar of Elizabeth; for the mendicant of Victoria may, with his prayed-for pence, purchase luxuries unknown to the Dives of former days.

And what—if we listen to complaining patriotism—what is the evil born of this? A loss of moral energy; a wasting away of national fibre. Believe this melancholy philosophy, and national weakness came in (a moral moth in the commodity) with silk stockings. Ere then was the bearing of man more majestic in the eyes of angels! For then was the sword the type of station; a gentleman no more appearing abroad without his rapier than a wasp without its sting. Human life could not but lose part of its dignity with its cold steel. What a fine comment on the charity, the gentleness, the humanity of his fellow-men, did every gentleman wear at his side! He was, in a manner, his own law-maker, his own executioner. In the judgment of later philosophy, we are prone to believe that the said gentlemen may appear, at the best, ferocious simpletons—creatures swaggering "between heaven and earth," with their hands upon their hilts, ready and yearning for a thrust at those who took the wall of their gentility. Ha! those, indeed, were the good old days! And then came a whining, curd-complexioned benevolence, and in progress of time, its thin, white, womanly fingers unbuckled the sword-belt of the bully, and organized police. Sword-makers were bankrupt, and human nature lost a grace!

Thus, it appears, the world has been from age to age declining in virtue, and can only escape the very profound of iniquity by a speedy dissolution. Every half-dozen years or so, a prophet growls from a cellar, or cries from the altitude of a garret, the advent of the last day. An earthquake, or some other convulsion (the particulars of which are only vouchsafed to the prophet) is to destroy the earth, or London at least; whereupon old gentlemen remove to Gravesend, and careful housewives take stock of their plate. Now, every such prophecy, instead of bewildering honest people with all sorts of fears, and all sorts of anxieties for their personal property, ought to make them sing thanksgiving songs for the promised blessing. It being the creed of these people that the world gets worse and worse, they would at least have the comfort to know that they had seen the last of its wickedness. For a moment, reader, we will suppose you one of these. Consider, upon your own faith, what a terrible wretch will necessarily be your great-great-great-great-great-grandson! Well, would it not be satisfaction to you that this dragon (we believe dragons are oviparous) should be crushed in the egg of the future? How would you like your own flesh and blood inevitably changed by the course of time into the anatomy of something very like a demon? You are bad enough as you are; that dismal truth your own humility preaches to you; to say nothing of the plain-speaking of your neighbours. No; out of pure love and pity for humanity, you ought to wish all the world to stop with your own pulse. It is hard enough now, even for the best of us, to keep on the respectable side of the statutes; but, with the growing wickedness of the world, we should like to know what sort of metal will the laws be made of. The great social link must, inevitably, be a fetter.

How often have we stood, with the unseen tears in our eyes, watching the nobility of the land, in nobility's best bib and tucker, winding in golden line to the drawing-room of Queen Victoria! Alas! degenerate

dukes—faded duchesses. Marquises fallen upon evil times—marchionesses very dim indeed! What are you to the nobility of Elizabeth? What to the grandees of those merry days, the golden shadow of which is brightness itself to the cold, grey glimmering of the present? We have yet one thought to comfort us; and that is, a half belief that the court of Elizabeth was held as nothing to all courts preceding; and so back, until Englishmen mourned over the abomination of cloaks and vests, sorrowing for those golden days, those good old times of the painted Britons! Great was the virtue abounding in *woad*; grievous the wilful iniquity woven in broad-cloth.

Queen Elizabeth died—fair, regal bud!—in the sweetness of virginity; and though the sun (by some despairing effort) managed to rise the next morning, it has never been wholly itself since. She died, and was brought to Whitehall, to the great calamity of the fish then swimming in the river; for a poet of the day, quoted by Camden, has eternized the evil that in the hour fell upon Thames flounders:—

> "The Queene was brought by water to Whitehall;
> At every stroke the oares teares let fall;
> More clung about the barge; fish under water
> *Wept out their eyes of pearle, and swame blinde after.*
> I think the bargemen might with easier thighes
> Have rowed her thither in her people's eyes.
> Yet, howsoere, thus much my thoughts have scann'd,
> She 'd come by water, had she come by land."

So closed the golden days of Queen Elizabeth; leaving us, in all the virtues and comforts of the world, the bankrupt children of Queen Victoria!

Unworthy is he of the balmy sweetness of this blessed May who can think so! A churlish, foolish, moody traitor to the spirit of goodness and beauty that, as with the bounty of the sun and air, calls up forms of loveliness in his path, and surrounds him with ten thousand household blessings! With active presence,

which the poet of Elizabeth, in even *his* large love for man, could scarce have dreamed of; or, dreaming, seen them as a part of fairy fantasy—a cloud-woven pageant!

Let the man who lives by his daily sweat pause in his toil, and, with his foot upon his spade, watch the white smoke that floats in the distance; listen to the lessening thunder of the engine that, instinct with Vulcanic life, has rushed, devouring space, before it. That little curl of smoke hangs in the air a thing of blessed promise—that roar of the engine is the melody of hope to unborn generations. But now, the digger of the soil looks moodily at that vapour, and his heart is festering with the curse upon the devil Steam; that fiend that grinds his bones beneath the wheels of British Juggernaut. Poor creature! The seeming demon is a beneficent presence that, in the ripeness of time, will work regeneration of the hopes of men.

Let the poor man—the mechanic of a town—look around him. Let him in his own house, humble though it be, acknowledge the presence of a thousand comforts which, had he lived two centuries ago, he could not with a baron's wealth have purchased. Not mere creature enjoyments; but humanizing, refining pleasures, drawing man nearer to man, expanding the human heart, and imparting to humanity the truest greatness in the greatest gentleness.

"What!" it may be asked—"can you have the hardihood, or the ignorance, to vaunt these days above the days of Elizabeth? These days, with famine throwing the shuttle—with ignorance, wholly brutish, digging in the pit—with gold, a monster all brain, and so the very worst of monsters—dominating throughout the land, and crushing the pulses of thousands within its hard, relentless grasp? Would you not rather pray for a return of those merry, merry days, when men were whipped, imprisoned, branded, burnt, at little more than the mere will of Majesty, for mere

opinion—but who had, nevertheless, bacon and bread and ale sufficient to the day?"

No; we would go no step backward, but many in advance; our faith still increasing in the enlarged sympathies of men; in the reverence which man has learned and is still learning to pay towards the nature of his fellow-men; in the deep belief that whatever change may and *must* take place in the social fabric,—we have that spirit of wisdom and tolerance (certainly *not* a social creature of the golden days) waxing strong among us,—so strong that the fabric will be altered and repaired brick by brick, and stone by stone. Meanwhile, the scaffolding is fast growing up about it.

THE ORDER OF POVERTY.

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Why should not Lazarus make to himself an order of tatters? Why should not poverty have its patch of honour? Wherefore should not the undubbed knights of evil fortune carry about them, with a gracious humility, the inevitable types of their valorous contest with the Paynim iniquities of life? Wherefore may not man wear indigence as proudly as nobility flashes its jewels? Is there not a higher heraldry than that of the college?

Not a very long time ago, the King of Greece awarded to an Englishman the Order of the Redeemer. The Englishman did not reject the gift; he did not stare with wonder, or smile in meek pity at the grave mockery of the distinction; but winning the consent of our Sovereign Lady Victoria to sport the jewel, the Knight of Christ—knight by the handiwork of the King of Greece—hung about him the Order of the Redeemer!

And what may be the gracious discipline of this Order of Redemption? Has the new Knight sold off all that he had, and given the money to the poor? We have heard of no such broker's work; and surely the newspaper tongue would have given loud utterance to the penitence of Mammon. What discipline, then, does this Order of Christ compel upon its holy and immaculate brotherhood? What glorifying services towards the heart and spirit of man—what self-martyrdom does it recompense? Is it the bright reward of humility—of active loving-kindness towards everything that breathes? Is it, that the knighted, beyond ten thousand thousand men, has proved the divine temper of the spiritual follower of Jesus, making his hourly life an active goodness, and with every breath drawn, drawing

nearer to rewarding Heaven? Surely, the Order of the Redeemer—that awful, solemn badge, setting apart its wearer from the sordid crowd of earth—could only be vouchsafed to some hard Christian service,—could only reward some triumphant wrestling of the suffering soul—some wondrous victory in the forlorn hope of this dark struggling life. These are our thoughts—these our passionate words; whereupon, the Herald of the Court of Greece—a grave, fantastic wizard—with mildly-reproving look and most delicate speech, says—"You are wrong: quite wrong. The Order of the Redeemer, though by no means the first Order, is a very pretty Order in its way. Six months since we gave it to Captain Jonquil, from Paris; and truly no man more deserved the Order of the Redeemer. He taught His Majesty's infantry the use of the bayonet: his howitzer practice, too, is a divine thing. Captain Jonquil is a great soldier. Last week, the Order of the Redeemer was also bestowed upon Andreas; a great favourite at court—but, if the naughty truth must be told, a pimp."

Alas! is heraldry always innocent of blasphemy?

On the 13th of June, 1843, a grave masque—a solemn ceremony—was held at the Court of St. James's. Heraldry again looked smug and pompous. A Knight was to be made of "the most ancient Order of the Thistle." Let us make a clean breast of our ignorance: we assert nothing against the antiquity of the Thistle; for what we know, it may be as old—ay, as old as asses. But upon the glad 13th of June, a Chapter was held, and John, Marquis of Bute, and the Right Hon. William, Earl of Mansfield, were elected Knights. They of course took the oaths to protect and succour distressed maidens, orphans, and widows; to abstain from every sort of wrong, and to do every sort of right.

"The Marquis of Bute then kneeling near the Sovereign, and Mr. Woods on his knee, presenting to the Queen the riband and jewel of the Order, Her Majesty was graciously pleased to place the same over the noble Marquis's left shoulder. His Lordship rising, kissed the Sovereign's hand, and having received the congratulations of the Knights brethren, retired."

From that moment, John, Marquis of Bute, looked and moved with the aspect and bearing of a man, radiant with new honours. He was a Knight of the Thistle; and the jewel sparkling at his bosom feebly typified the bright, admiring looks of the world—the gaze of mingled love and admiration bent upon him. But on this earth—in this abiding-place of equity—men do not get even thistles for nothing. It may, indeed, happen, that desert may pant and moan without honour; but in the court of kings, where justice weighs with nicest balance, honour never with its smiles mocks imbecility, or gilds with outward lustre a concealed rottenness. Honour never gives alms, but awards justice. Mendicancy, though with liveried lackies clustering at its carriage,—and there is such pauperism,—may whine and pray its hardest, yet move not the inflexible herald. He awards those jewels to virtue, which virtue has sweated, bled for. And it is with this belief, yea, in the very bigotry of the creed, we ask — what has John, Marquis of Bute, fulfilled to earn his thistle? What, the Right Hon. William, Earl of Mansfield? What dragon wrong has either overcome? What giant Untruth stormed in Sophist Castle? What necromantic wickedness baffled and confounded? Yet, these battles have been fought —these triumphs won; oh! who shall doubt them? Be sure of it, ye unbelieving demagogues—scoffing plebeians, not for nothing nobility browses upon thistles.

We pay all honour to these inventions, these learned devices of the Herald. They doubtless clothe, comfort, and adorn humanity, which, without them, would be cold, naked, shrunk, and squalid. They, moreover, gloriously attest the supremacy of the tame, the civilized man, over the wild animal. The Orders of the Herald are *tattoo* without the pain of puncture. The New Zealander carries his knighthood, lined and starred and flowered in his visage. The civilized knight hangs it more conveniently on a riband.

We are such devout believers in the efficacy of Orders,

that we devote this small essay to an attempt to make them, under some phase or other, universal. We will not linger in a consideration of the Orders already dead; lovely was their life, and as fragrant is their memory. There was one Order—Teutonic, if we mistake not, the Order of Fools. There was a quaint sincerity in the very title of this brotherhood. Its philosophy was outspeaking; and more than all, the constitution of such a chapter admitted knights against whose worthiness, whose peculiar right to wear the badge, no envious demagogue could say his bitter saying. Surely, in our reverence for the wisdom of antiquity, this Order might have resurrection. The Fool might have his bauble newly varnished — his cap newly hung with tinkling bells. Some of us chirp and cackle of the wisdom of the bygone day; but that is only wisdom which jumps with our own cunning; which fortifies us in the warm and quiet nook of some hallowed prejudice. From the mere abstract love of justice, we should be right glad to have the Order of Fools revived in the fullest splendour of Folly. Such an Order would so beneficently provide for many unrewarded public idlers — ay, and public workers.

There was a time, when the world in its first childhood needed playthings. Then was the Herald the world's toy-maker, and made for it pretty little nick-knacks—golden fleeces—stars, ribands and garters; tempting the world to follow the kickshaws, as nurse with sugared bread-and-butter tempts the yeanling to try its tottering feet. The world has grown old—old and wise: yet is not the Herald bankrupt, but like a pedlar at a fair, draws the hearts of simple men after the shining, silken glories in his box. Meanwhile, philosophy in hodden grey, laughs at the crowd, who bellow back the laugh, and sometimes pelt the reverend fool for his irreligious humour; for he who believes not in Stars and Garters is unbeliever; to the world's best and brightest faith, atheist and scoffer.

Is it not strange that a man should think the better of himself for a few stones glittering in his bosom? That a costly band about the leg should make the blood dance more swiftly through the arteries? That a man seeing his breast set with jewellers' stars, should think them glorious as the stars of heaven,—himself, little less than an earthly god, so deified? If these things be really types and emblems of true greatness, what rascal poverty besets the man without them! How is he damned in his baseness! What mere offal of humanity, the biped without an Order! And, therefore, let stars be multiplied; and let nobility—like bees—suck honey from Thistles!

We are, however, confirmed in our late failing faith. We are bigoted to Orders. Men, like watches, must work the better upon jewels. Man is, at the best, a puppet; and is only put into dignified motion when pulled by Blue or Red Ribands. Now, as few, indeed, of us can get stars, garters, or ribands, let us have Orders of our own. Let us, with invincible self-complacency, ennoble ourselves.

In the hopeless ignorance and vulgarity of our first prejudice, we might possibly want due veneration for the Golden Fleece; an ancient and most noble Order, worn by few. Yet with all our worst carelessness towards the Order, we never felt for it the same pitying contempt we feel towards an Order worn by many—not at their button-holes, not outside their breasts, but in the very core of their hearts,—the Order of the Golden Calf.

Oh! bowelless Plutus, what a host of Knights! What a lean-faced, low-browed, thick-jowled, swag-bellied brotherhood! Deformity, in all its fantastic variety, meets in the Chapter. They wear no armour of steel or brass, but are cased in the magic mail of impenetrable Bank-paper. They have no sword, no spear, no iron mace with spikes; but they ride merrily into the fight of life, swinging about gold-gutted purses, and levelling with the dust rebellious poverty. These are the Knights

of the Golden Calf. It is a glorious community. What a look of easy triumph they have! With what serene self-satisfaction they measure the wide distance between mere paupers—the Knights of the Order of Nothing—and themselves! How they walk the earth as if they alone possessed the patent of walking upright! How they dilate in the light of their own gold, like adders in the sun!

A most fatal honour is this Order of the Golden Calf. It is worn unseen, as we have said, in the hearts of men; but its effects are visible: the disease speaks out in every atom of flesh—poor human worm's-meat! —and throbs in every muscle. It poisons the soul; gives the eye a squint; takes from the face of fellow-man its God-gifted dignity, and makes him a thing to prey upon: to work, to use up; to reduce to so much hard cash; then to be put up, with a wary look of triumph, into the pocket. This Order damns with a leprosy of soul its worshipper. It blinds and deafens him to the glories and the harmonies ministrant to poorer men. His eye is jaundiced, and in the very stars of God he sees nought but twinkling guineas.

At this moment great is the Order throughout the land! Tyrannous its laws, reckless its doings. It is strong, and why should it be just? To be of this Order is now the one great striving of life. They alone are men who wear the jewel—wretches they without it. Man was originally made from the dust of the earth: he is now formed of a richer substance: the true man is made of gold. Yes, the regenerate Adam is struck only at the Mint.

The Knights of the Order of the Golden Calf have no formal ceremony of election; yet has brother Knight almost instinctive knowledge of brother. In the solitude of his own thoughts is he made one of the community; in utter privacy he kisses the pulseless hand of Plutus, and swears to his supremacy. The oath divorces him from pauper-life—from its cares, its wants, its sym-

pathies. He is privileged from the uneasiness of thought, the wear and tear of anxiety for fellow-man ; he is compact, and self-concentrated in his selfishness. Nought ruffles him that touches not that inmost jewel of his soul, his knighthood's Order.

In the olden day, the Knights of the Fleece, the Garter, and other glories, won their rank upon the battle-field,—blood and strife being to them the handmaids of honour. The chivalry of the Golden Calf is mild and gentle. It splits no brain-pan, spills no blood ; yet is it ever fighting. We are at the Exchange. Look at that easy, peaceful man. What a serenity is upon his cheek ! What a mild lustre in his eye ! How plainly is he habited ! He wears the livery of simplicity and the look of peace. Yet has he in his heart the Order of the Golden Calf. He is one of Mammon's boldest heroes. A very soldier of fortune. He is now fighting —fighting valorously. He has come armed with a brannew lie—a falsehood of surpassing temper, which with wondrous quietude he lays about him, making huge gashes in the money-bags of those he fights with. A good foreign lie, well finished and well mounted, is to this Knight of the Golden Calf as the sword of Faery to Orlando. With it he sometimes cuts down giant fortunes ; and after, "grinds their bones to make his bread."

And there are small esquires and pages of the Order ; men who, with heart-felt veneration, lick their lips at the Golden Calf, and with more than bridegroom yearning pant for possession. These small folk swarm like summer-gnats ; and still they drone the praises of the Calf ; and looking at no other thing, have their eyes bleared and dazzled to all beside.

The Knights of the Golden Calf shed no blood ; that is, the wounds they deal bleed inwardly, and give no evidence of homicide. They are, too, great consumers of the marrow of men ; and yet they break no bones, but by a trick known to their Order extract without frac-

ture precious nutriment. They are great alchemists, too; and turn the sweat of unrequited poverty, aye, the tears of childhood, into drops of gold.

Much wrong, much violence, much wayward cruelty—if the true history of knighthood were indicted—lies upon the Fleece, the Garter, yes, upon the Templars' Lamb;—yet all is but as May-day pastime to the voracity, the ignorance, the wilful selfishness, the bestial lowings, of the Golden Calf. And of this Order, the oldest of the brotherhood are the most gluttonous. There is one whose every fibre is blasted with age. To the imagination his face is as a coffin-plate. Yet is he all belly. As cruel as a cat, though toothless as a bird!

Oh, ye knights, great and small—whether expanding on the mart, or lying *perdu* in back-parlours,—fling from your hearts the Order there, and feel for once the warmth of kindly blood! The brotherhood chuckle at the adjuration. Well, let us fight the Order with an Order.

The Order of Poverty against the Order of the Golden Calf!

Will it not be a merry time, when men, with a blithe face and open look, shall confess that they are poor? When they shall be to the world what they are to themselves? When the lie, the shuffle, the bland, yet anxious hypocrisy of seeming, and seeming only, shall be a creed forsworn? When Poverty asserts itself, and never blushes and stammers at its true name, the Knights of the Calf must give ground. Much of their strength, their poor renown, their miserable glory, lies in the hypocrisy of those who would imitate them. They believe themselves great, because the poor, in the very ignorance of the dignity of poverty, would ape their magnificence.

The Order of Poverty! How many sub-orders might it embrace! As the spirit of Gothic chivalry has its fraternities, so might the Order of Poverty have its distinct devices.

The Order of the Thistle! That is an order for nobility—a glory to glorify marquisate or earldom. Can we not, under the rule of Poverty, find as happy a badge?

Look at this peasant. His face bronzed with mid-day toil. From sun-rise to sunset, with cheerful looks and uncomplaining words, he turns the primal curse to dignity, and manfully earns his bread in the sweat of his brow. Look at the fields around! Golden with blessed corn. Look at this bloodless soldier of the plough—this hero of the sickle. His triumphs are there, piled up in bread-bestowing sheaves. Is he not Sir Knight of the Wheat-Ear? Surely, as truly dubbed in the heraldry of justice, as any Knight of the Thistle.

And here is a white-haired shepherd. As a boy, a child, playful as the lambs he tended, he laboured. He has dreamed away his life upon a hill-side—on downs—on solitary heaths. The humble, simple, patient watcher for fellow-men. Solitude has been his companion: he has grown old, wrinkled, bent in the eye of the burning sun. His highest wisdom is a guess at the coming weather: he may have heard of diamonds, but he knows the evening star. He has never sat at a congress of kings: he has never helped to commit a felony upon a whole nation. Yet is he, to our mind, a most reverend Knight of the Fleece. If the Herald object to this, let us call him Knight of the Lamb! In its gentleness and patience, a fitting type of the poor old shepherd.

And here is a pauper, missioned from the workhouse to break stones at the road-side. How he strikes and strikes at that unyielding bit of flint! Is it not the stony heart of the world's injustice knocked at by poverty? What haggardness is in his face! What a blight hangs about him! There are more years in his looks than in his bones. Time has marked him with an iron pen. He wailed as a babe for bread his father was not allowed to earn. He can recollect every dinner—they were so few—of his childhood. He grew up, and

want was with him, even as his shadow. He has shivered with cold—fainted with hunger. His every day of life has been set about by goading wretchedness. Around him, too, were the stores of plenty. Food, raiment, and money mocked the man made half mad with destitution. Yet, with a valorous heart, a proud conquest of the shuddering spirit, he walked with honesty and starved. His long journey of life hath been through thorny places, and now he sits upon a pile of stones on the way-side, breaking them for workhouse bread. Could loftiest chivalry show greater heroism—nobler self-control, than this old man, this weary breaker of flints? Shall he not be of the Order of Poverty? Is not penury to him even as a robe of honour? His grey workhouse coat braver than purple and miniver? He shall be Knight of the Granite if you will. A workhouse gem, indeed—a wretched, highway jewel—yet, to the eye of truth, finer than many a ducal diamond.

This man is a weaver; this a potter. Here, too, is a razor-grinder; here an iron-worker. Labour is their lot; labour they yearn for, though to some of them labour comes with miserable disease and early death. Have we not here Knights of the Shuttle, Knights of Clay, and Knights of Vulcan, who prepare the carcase of the giant engine for its vital flood of steam? Are not these among the noblest of the sons of Poverty? Shall they not take high rank in its Order?

We are at the mouth of a mine. There, many, many fathoms below us, works the naked, grimed, and sweating wretch, oppressed, brutalized, that he may dig us coal for our winter's hearth; where we may gather round, and with filled bellies, well-clothed backs, and hearts all lapped in self-complacency, talk of the talked-of evils of the world, as though they were the fables of ill-natured men, and not the verities of bleeding life. That these men, doing the foulest offices of the world should still be of the world's poorest, gives dignity to want—the glory of long-suffering to poverty.

And so, indeed, in the mind of wisdom, is poverty ennobled. And for the Knights of the Golden Calf, how are they outnumbered! Let us, then, revive the Order of Poverty. Ponder, Reader, on its antiquity. For was not Christ himself Chancellor of the Order, and the Apostles Knights Companions?

A GOSSIP AT RECULVERS.

The spirit of the Saxon seems still to linger along the shores of Kent. There is the air of antiquity about them; a something breathing of the olden day—an influence, surviving all the changes of time, all the vicissitudes of politic and social life. The genius of the Heptarchy comes closer upon us from the realm of shadows: the Wittenagemote is not a convocation of ghosts—not a venerable House of Mists; but a living, talking, voting Parliament. We feel a something old, strong, stubborn, hearty; a something for the intense meaning of which we have no other word than "English," rising about us from every rood of Kent. And wherefore this? England was not made piecemeal. Her foundations in the deep—could a sea of molten gold purchase the worth of her surrounding ocean?—are of the same age. The same sun has risen and set upon the whole island. Wherefore, then, is Kent predominant in the mind for qualities which the mind denies to other counties? Because it is still invested with the poetry of action. Because we feel that Kent was the cradle of the marrow and bone of England; because we still see, ay, as palpably as we behold yonder trail of ebon smoke,—the broad black pennant of that mighty admiral, Steam,—the sails of Cæsar threatening Kent, and Kent barbarians clustering on the shore, defying him. It is thus that the spirit of past deeds survives immortally, and works upon the future: it is thus we are indissolubly linked to the memories of the bygone day, by the still active soul that once informed it.

How rich in thoughts—how fertile in fancies that quicken the brain and dally with the heart, is every

foot-pace of this soil! Reader, be with us for a brief time, at this beautiful village of Herne. The sky is sullen; and summer, like a fine yet froward wench, smiles now and then, now frowns the blacker for the passing brightness: nevertheless, summer in her worst mood cannot spoil the beautiful features of this demure, this antique village. It seems a very nest—warm and snug, and green—for human life; with the twilight haze of time about it, almost consecrating it from the aching hopes and feverish expectations of the present. Who would think that the bray and roar of multitudinous London sounded but some sixty miles away? The church stands peacefully, reverently; like some old, visionary monk, his feet on earth—his thoughts with God. And the graves are all about; and things of peace and gentleness, like folded sheep, are gathered round it.

There is a stile which man might make the throne of solemn thought—his pregnant matter, the peasant bones that lie beneath. And on the other side, a park, teeming with beauty; with sward green as emeralds, and soft as a mole's back; and trees, with centuries circulating in their gnarled massiveness.

But we must quit the churchyard, and turning to the right, we will stroll towards Reculvers. How rich the swelling meadows! How their green breasts heave with conceived fertility! And on this side corn-fields; the grain stalk thick as a reed; the crop level and compact as a green bank. And here, too, is a field of canary-seed: of seed grown for London birds in London cages. The farmer shoots the sparrow—the little rustic scoundrel—that, with felonious bill, would carry away one grain sown for, made sacred to, Portman-square canary! We might, perhaps, find a higher parallel to this, did we look with curious eyes about us. Nevertheless, bumpkin sparrow has his world of air to range in; his free loves; and for his nest his ivied wall or hawthorn bush. These, say the worst, are a happy

set-off even against a gilt-wired cage ; sand like diamond dust ; unfailing seed, and sugar from even the sweeter lips of lady mistress. Powder and small shot may come upon the sparrow like apoplexy upon an alderman, with the unbolted morsel in its gullet ; yet, consider—hath the canary no danger to encounter? Doth not prosperity keep a cat?

Well, this idle gossip has brought us within a short distance of Reculvers. Here—so goes the hoary legend—Augustine impressed the first Christian foot upon the English shore, sent hither by good Pope Gregory ; no less good that, if the same legend be true, he had a subtle sense of a joke. Christianity, unless historians say what is not, owes somewhat of its introduction into heathen England to a pun. The story is so old, that there is not a schoolmaster's dog throughout merry Britain, that could not bark it. Nevertheless, we will indicate our moral courage by repeating it. Our ink turns red with blushes at the thought—no matter—for once we will write in our blushes.

Pope Gregory, seeing some white-haired, pink-cheeked boys for sale in the Roman slave-market, asked, who they were? *Sunt Angli*—they are English, was the response. *Non sunt Angli—sed Angeli ;* they are not English, but angels, was the Papal playfulness. His Holiness then inquired, from what part of England. *Deirii*, they are Deirians, was the answer. Whereupon the Pope, following up his vein of pleasantry, said, *Non Deirii, sed De irâ*,—not Deirians, but from the anger of the Lord : snatched, as his Holiness indicated, from the vengeance that must always light upon heathenism.

This grey-haired story, like the grey hairs of Nestor, is pregnant with practical wisdom. Let us imagine Pope Gregory to have been a dull man ; even for a Pope a dull man. Let us allow that his mind had not been sufficiently comprehensive to take within its circle the scattered lights of intelligence which, brought into a focus, make a joke. Suppose, in a word, that the pope

had had no ear for a pun? Saint Augustine might still have watched the bubbles upon Tiber, and never have been sea-sick on his English voyage.

What does this prove? What does this incident preach with a thunder-tongue? Why, the necessity, the vital necessity, of advancing no man to any sort of dignity, who is not all alive as an eel to a joke. We are convinced of it. The world will never be properly ruled, until jests entirely supersede the authority of Acts of Parliament. As it is, the Acts are too frequently the jests, without the fun.

We are now close to Reculvers. There, reader, there —where you see that wave leaping up to kiss that big white stone—that is the very spot where Saint Augustine put down the sole of his Catholic foot. If it be not, we have been misinformed, and cheated of our money; we can say no more.

Never mind the spot. Is there not a glory lighting up the whole beach? Is not every wave of silver—every little stone, a shining crystal? Doth not the air vibrate with harmonies, strangely winding into the heart, and awakening the brain? Are we not under the spell of the imagination which makes the present vulgarity melt away like morning mists, and shows to us the full, uplighted glory of the past?

There was a landing on the Sussex Coast; a landing of a Duke of Normandy, and a horde of armed cut-throats. Looking at them even through the distance of some eight hundred years, what are they but as a gang of burglars? A band of pick-purses—bloodshedders—robbers?

What was this landing of a host of men, in the full trump and blazonry of war,—what all their ships, their minstrelsy, and armed power,—to the advent of Augustine and his fellow-monks, brought hither by the forlornness of the soul of man? It is this thought that makes this bit of pebbled beach a sacred spot; it is this spirit of meditation that hears in every little wave a sweet and solemn music.

And there, where the ocean tumbles, was in the olden day a goodly town, sapped, swallowed by the wearing, the voracious sea. At lowest tides, the people still discover odd, quaint, household relics, which, despite the homely breeding of the finders, must carry away their thoughts into the mist of time, and make them feel antiquity. The very children of the village are hucksters of the spoils of dead centuries. They grow up with some small trading knowledge of fossils; and are deep, very deep in all sorts of petrifactions. They must have strange early sympathies towards that mysterious town with all its tradesfolk and market-folk sunk below the sea; a place of which they have a constant inkling in the petty spoils lashed upward by the tempest. Indeed, it is difficult for the mind to conceive the annihilation of a whole town, engulphed in the ocean. The tricksy fancy will assert itself; and looking over the shining water, with summer basking on it, we are apt to dream that the said market-town has only suffered a "sea change;" and that fathoms deep, the town still stands —that busy life goes on—that people of an odd, sea-green aspect, it may be, still carry on the work of mortal breathing; make love, beget little ones, and die. But this, indeed, is the dream of idleness. Yet, who—if he could change his mind at will, would make his mind incapable of such poor fantasies? How much of the coarse web of existence owes its beauty to the idlest dreams with which we colour it!

The village of Reculvers is a choice work of antiquity. The spirit of King Ethelbert tarries there still, and lives enshrined in the sign of a public-house. It would be well for all kings, could their spirits survive with such genial associations. There are some dead royalties too profitless even for a public sign. Who, now, with any other choice would empty a tankard under the auspices of Bloody Mary, as that anointed "femininitie" is called; or take a chop even at Nero's Head? No: inn-keepers know the subtle prejudices of man, nor violate the sympathies of life with their sign-posts.

Here, on the sanded floor of King Ethelbert's hostelry, do village antiquarians often congregate. Here, at times, are stories told—stories not all unworthy of the type of Antiquarian *Transactions*—of *fibulæ*, talked of as "buckles," and other tangible bits of Roman history. Here, we have heard, how a certain woman—living at this blessed hour, and the mother of a family—went out at very low tide, and found the branch of a filbert-tree with clustering filberts on it, all stone, at least a thousand years old—and more. Here, too, have we heard of a wonderful horse-shoe, picked up by Joe Squellins; a shoe, as the finder averred, as old as the world. Poor Joe! What was his reward?—it may be, a pint of ale for that inestimable bit of iron! And yet was he a working antiquarian. Joe Squellins had within him the unchristened elements of F. S. A.!

The sea has spared something of the old church-yard; although it has torn open the sad sanctity of the grave, and reveals to the day, corpse upon corpse—layers of the dead, thickly, closely packed, body upon body. A lateral view of rows of skeletons, entombed in Christian earth centuries since, for a moment staggers the mind, with this inward peep of the grave. We at once see the close, dark prison of the church-yard, and our breath comes heavily, and we shudder. It is only for a moment. There is a lark singing, singing over our head—a mile upwards in the blue heaven—singing like a freed soul: we look again, and smile serenely at the bones of what was man.

Many of our gentle countrymen—fellow-metropolitans—who once a year wriggle out their souls from the slit of their tills to give the immortal essence sea air, make a pilgrimage to Reculvers. This Golgotha, we have noted it, has to them especial attractions. Many are the mortal relics borne away to decorate a London chimney-piece. Many a skeleton gives up its rib, its *ulna*, two or three odd *vertebræ*, or some such gimcrack to the London visitor, for a London ornament. Present the

same man with a bone from a London hospital, and he would hold the act abominable, irreligiously presumptuous. But time has "silvered o'er" the bone from Reculvers; has cleansed it from the taint of mortality; has merged the loathsomeness in the curiosity; for Time turns even the worst of horrors to the broadest of jests. We have now Guy Fawkes, about to blow Lords and Commons into eternity—and now Guy Fawkes, masked for a pantomime.

One day, wandering near this open grave-yard, we met a boy, carrying away, with exulting looks, a skull in very perfect preservation. He was a London boy, and looked rich indeed with his treasure.

"What have you there?" we asked.

"A man's head—a skull," was the answer.

"And what can you possibly do with a skull?"

"Take it to London."

"And when you have it in London, what then will you do with it?"

"I know."

"No doubt. But what will you do with it?"

And to this thrice-repeated question, the boy three times answered, "I know."

"Come, here's sixpence. Now, what will you do with it?"

The boy took the coin—grinned—hugged himself, hugging the skull the closer, and said very briskly—"Make a money box of it!"

A strange thought for a child. And yet, mused we as we strolled along, how many of us, with nature beneficent and smiling on all sides,—how many of us think of nothing so much as hoarding sixpences—yea, hoarding them even in the very jaws of desolate Death!

THE OLD MAN AT THE GATE.

In Surrey, some three miles from Chertsey, is a quiet, dull, sequestered nook, called Shepperton Green. Whether the new philanthropy of new pauper laws hath, of late years, sought out the spot, I know not. At the time whereof I write, the olden charity dwelt in an old workhouse—a primitive abiding-place for the broken ploughman, the palsied shepherd, the old, old peasant, for whom nothing more remained in this world but to die. The governor of this abode of benevolence dwelt in the lower part of the building, and therein, as the village trade might fluctuate, made or mended shoes. Let the plain truth be said—the governor was a cobbler. Within a stone's cast of the workhouse, was a little white gate swung between two hedge-banks in the road to Chertsey. Here, pass when you would, stood an old man, whose self-imposed office it was to open the gate; for the which service the passenger would drop some small benevolence in the withered hand of the aged peasant. This man was a pauper—one of the almsmen of the village workhouse.

There was a custom—whether established by the governor aforesaid, or by predecessors of a vanished century, I know not—that made it the privilege of the oldest pauper to stand the porter at the gate; his perquisite, by right of years, the halfpence of the rare pedestrian. As the senior died, the living senior succeeded to the office. Now the gate—and, now the grave.

And this is all the history? All. The story is told—it will not bear another syllable. The "Old Man"

is at the gate; the custom which places him there has been made known, and with it ends the narrative.

How few the incidents of life—how multitudinous its emotions! How flat, monotonous may be the circumstance of daily existence, and yet how various the thoughts which spring from it! Look at yonder landscape, broken into hill and dale, with trees of every hue and form, and water winding in silver threads through velvet fields. How beautiful—for how various! Cast your eye over that moor; it is flat and desolate—barren as barren rock. Not so. Seek the soil, and then, with nearer gaze, contemplate the wondrous forms and colours of the thousand mosses growing there; give ear to the hum of busy life sounding at every root of poorest grass. Listen! Does not the heart of the earth beat audibly beneath this seeming barrenness—audibly as where the corn grows and the grape ripens? Is it not so with the veriest rich and the veriest poor—with the most active and with apparently the most inert?

That "Old Man at the Gate" has eighty years upon his head—eighty years, covering it with natural reverence. He was once in London—only once. This pilgrimage excepted, he has never journeyed twenty miles from the cottage in which he was born; of which he became the master; whereto he brought his wife; where his children saw the light, and their children after; where many of them died; and whence, having with a stout soul, fought against the strengthening ills of poverty and old age, he was thrust by want and sickness out, and, with a stung heart, he laid his bones upon a workhouse bed.

Life to the "Old Man" has been one long path across a moor—a flat, unbroken journey; the eye uncheered, the heart unsatisfied. Coldness and sterility have compassed him round. Yet, has he been subdued to the blankness of his destiny? Has his mind remained the unwrit page that schoolmen talk of—has his heart become a clod? Has he been made by poverty a moving

image—a plough-guiding, corn-thrashing instrument? Have not unutterable thoughts sometimes stirred within his brain—thoughts that elevated, yet confused him with a sense of eternal beauty—coming upon him like the spiritual presences to the shepherds? Has he not been beset by the inward and mysterious yearning of the heart towards the unknown and the unseen? He has been a ploughman. In the eye of the well-to-do, dignified with the accomplishments of reading and writing, is he of little more intelligence than the oxen treading the glebe. Yet, who shall say that the influence of nature—that the glories of the rising sun—may not have called forth harmonies of soul from the rustic drudge, the moving statue of a man!

That worn-out, threadbare remnant of humanity at the gate; age makes it reverend, and the inevitable—shall inevitable be said?—injustice of the world, invests it with majesty; the majesty of suffering meekly borne, and meekly decaying. "The poor shall never cease out of the land." This text the self-complacency of competence loveth to quote: it hath a melody in it, a lulling sweetness to the selfishness of our nature. Hunger, and cold, and nakedness, are the hard portion of man; there is no help for it; rags must flutter about us; man, yes, even the strong man, his only wealth (the wealth of Adam) wasting in his bones, must hold his pauper hand to his brother of four meals *per diem;* it is a necessity of nature, and there is no help for it. And thus some men send their consciences to sleep by the clinking of their own purses. Necessity of evil is an excellent philosophy, applied to everybody but—ourselves.

These easy souls will see nothing in our "Old Man at the Gate" but a pauper, let out of the workhouse, for the chance of a few halfpence. Surely, he is something more? He is old; very old. Every day, every hour, earth has less claim in him. He is so old, so feeble, that even as you look he seems sinking. At sunset, he is scarcely the man who opened the gate to you in the

morning. Yet there is no disease in him—none. He is dying of old age. He is working out that most awful problem of life—slowly, solemnly. He is now, the badged pauper—and now, in the unknown country with Solomon!

Can man look upon a more touching solemnity? There stands the old man, passive as a stone, nearer, every moment, to churchyard clay! It was only yesterday that he took his station at the gate. His predecessor held the post for two years; he too daily, daily dying—

> "Till like a clock, worn out with eating time,
> The weary wheels of life at length stood still."

How long will the present watcher survive? In that very uncertainty—in the very hoariness of age which brings home to us that uncertainty—there is something that makes the old man sacred; for, in the course of nature, is not the oldest man the nearest to the angels?

Yet, away from these thoughts, there is reverence due to that old man. What has been his life? A war with suffering. What a beautiful world is this! How rich and glorious! How abundant in blessings—great and little—to thousands! What a lovely place hath God made it; and how have God's creatures darkened and outraged it to the wrong of one another! Well, what had this man of the world? What stake, as the effrontery of selfishness has it? The wild-fox was better cared for. Though preserved some day to be killed, it *was* preserved until then. What did this old man inherit? Toil, incessant toil, with no holiday of the heart: he came into the world a badged animal of labour; the property of animals. What was the earth to him?—a place to die in.

"The poor shall never cease out of the land." Shall we then, accommodating our sympathies to this hard necessity, look serenely down upon the wretched? Shall we preach only comfort to ourselves from the doomed con-

dition of others? It is an easy philosophy; so easy there is but little wonder it is so well exercised.

But "The Old Man at the Gate" has, for seventy years, worked and worked; and what his closing reward? The workhouse. Shall we not, some of us, blush crimson at our own world-successes, considering the destitution of our worthy, single-hearted fellows? Should not affluence touch its hat to "The Old Man at the Gate" with a reverence for the years upon him; he—the born soldier of poverty, doomed for life to lead life's forlorn hope? Thus considered, surely Dives may unbonnet to Lazarus.

To our mind, the venerableness of age made "The Old Man at the Gate" something like a spiritual presence. He was so old, who could say how few the pulsations of his heart between him and the grave! But there he was with a meek happiness upon him; gentle, cheerful. He was not built up in bricks and mortar; but was still in the open air, with the sweetest influences about him; the sky—the trees—the green sward,—and flowers with the breath of God in them!

THE END.

LONDON
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